

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

Vol. XVII

NOVEMBER, 1905

No. 3

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$2.50

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Entered at New York Post-Office as second-class mail matter

Issued Monthly by Ess Ess Publishing Company, 452 Fifth Avenue, New York

THE DECEMBER "SMART SET"

A powerful novel will open the next issue of this magazine. It will undoubtedly prove one of the strongest stories of the year, and is intensely interesting and dramatic.

It is entitled

"BONDAGE," by Edna Kenton

A Christmas flavor will be found in the December number. Besides three charming Christmas stories by Ralph Henry Barbour, Inez Haynes Gillmore and Ellis Parker Butler, there will appear a genuinely humorous tale by Maarten Maartens, a story of keen character analysis by Beatrix Demarest Lloyd, a delightful child story by Theodosia Garrison, and other stories by Gelett Burgess, Frederick Fenn and Pomona Penrin.

The essay is called "Little Journeys," a paper full of quiet humor, by H. G. Dwight.

Poems will be contributed by Clinton Scollard, C. F. Rooper, Grace MacGowan Cooke, Elsa Barker, Arthur Stringer and others.

The December number will have as a frontispiece a beautiful portrait of Her Grace the Duchess of Marlborough.

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WILLIAM GREEN, Printer, New York

THE GAME AND THE CANDLE

By Frances Davidge

“IF you put it that way,” remarked Mr. Casimir Driscoll as he flicked the ash from his cigarette, “we are all snobs.”

He was sitting by Mrs. Jerry Blair’s drawing-room fire, looking up at the niece of the lady of the house, as she stood beside him. At the other end of the room a party were playing bridge, to which, every now and then, a hilarious burst followed by a deathlike silence gave evidence.

They had just come from dinner, and Mr. Driscoll was balancing his coffee-cup carefully on his knee. He was a large man, whose advanced middle age attested that his youth had been handsome. A look of comfortable repose was upon him. The way he held his coffee-cup showed that he was an epicure; the way his small, keen eyes twinkled showed that he was an observer; and his softened expression, as he looked up at Emily Blair, pleaded that he was frankly fond of her.

She laughed as he spoke, and turned and moved an ornament on the mantelpiece against which she was leaning.

“My dear Mr. Casimir, that is just what I claim. Your snobbishness is from the standpoint of your club window, mine is from the standpoint of the Assembly List—or used to be. We cloak our sins very cleverly, perhaps, and call them virtues; but the one sin of which we pigmy New Yorkers are vastly proud is that which we term, with a patronizing smile, our exclusiveness.”

She paused and threw back her dark, elaborately curled head.

“Look at Larry Wharncliffe over there I verily believe that he thanks

God on his knees that he has wormed his way to an exclusive position where he can afford to be rude to people. Think of dear Aunt Adelaide and her menagerie of fame, admission to which is exclusively by personal invitation. Think of yourself, and your exclusive board of club governors. Think of me, and my exclusive charities and my exclusive set—and see, honestly, which of us is the greatest snob.”

Mr. Driscoll laughed, his portly person shaking with quiet enjoyment.

“How old are you?” he asked.

“Old enough for three things: first, to have hidden my christening cup; second, to have forsworn white dresses; third, to realize how young I am.”

“Namely?”

“Thirty. For ten hectic seasons I have sat smiling in Aunt Adelaide’s opera-box on Mondays and sent it to our poor relations on Saturdays. For ten seasons I have gone South in February because it was fashionable to do so, and to house-parties in the spring for the same reason. For ten seasons I have bought my clothes in Paris and charitied my charities at the church where we all do—for the same eternal reason: it has been fashionable. Ah, no”—she sat down on the sofa beside him and sighed—“don’t talk about snobs, for I’m the greatest snob of you all.”

“It is a pity you are not younger,” observed Mr. Driscoll pensively, watching the smoke of his cigarette curl upward. “Youth has inestimable advantages in that it is self-delusive.”

“I don’t mean to claim any great amount of common sense, but I am not young,” said Emily gloomily. “I

have never been young—which means that I have never yet really grown up. Ever since I was six I have been sixty. And it has always been an effort for me to fit myself to youth; age is a better atmosphere for me.”

“Physically or mentally?”

“Oh, entirely physically. I am elastic enough mentally to adapt myself to babes or dotards. But physically I find that young people make me seem old, whereas you blessed old—or, let us say, older—people, make me seem young.”

“Why is it that a woman will always face a philosophical question from the standpoint of looks?”

“There you are wrong, my dear sir. It is only a woman whose faith in her looks is uncertain who realizes the value of beauty. A pretty woman will insist on her looks; but it is the ugly woman who calculates about them.”

“You are not ugly,” said Mr. Casimir, eying her critically.

“Say rather that I have just missed being handsome,” laughed Emily. “Good possibilities are better than poor facts.”

“It would have been very unbalanced of Providence to have made you beautiful. One cannot have your tongue and other things besides; just as a woman cannot play tennis and yet move like a swan. Whatever you say, my dear Emily, I see that you are still young enough to be greedy; I, alas! am old enough to be consistent.”

“And whatever else you are, you are very nice; and you are principally nice because you are not modern New York.” She smiled. “To think that in this progressive city we have sunk so low that we respect only the people who are not as ourselves!”

Mr. Driscoll smoked on in silence for a moment. His eyes were on the party of bridge-players, who were discussing a disputed point with rapt interest. About the corners of his set, strong mouth there was a look of something like disappointment. He turned to Emily Blair.

“Why have you never broken away from all this?” he asked suddenly.

Emily opened her fan, and began to move it to and fro. About her neck there hung a little chain of pearls, which her fingers were continually twisting and twirling. Her restlessness had told on her, too, for her face was lined in places and her eyes looked tired.

“That answer would involve so many subjects,” she retorted lightly, “that your patience would be exhausted if I made the attempt.”

“In other words, you politely request me to mind my own business, my dear.”

She stretched out her hand and laid it on his, with a quick, involuntary gesture of affection. Then she shook her head.

“No, no. It would make stupid conversation, my reason for being what I am. If I were sentimental I should call it ‘*le pourquoi mystérieux*.’ Being eminently practical, I will simply define it as the pulse of the machine. I am a very good machine, Mr. Casimir; but there has never been any pulse to me. And lately I have found that even the mechanism of my fascinations was beginning to creak.”

“I will tell you frankly what I believe has been wrong with you, from the beginning,” observed Mr. Driscoll thoughtfully. “The fact that I am your oldest friend perhaps gives me the right to be abusive. Well, then, you have set too much store on”—he waved his hand toward the bridge-players, including the whole rich, comfortable room in the gesture—“on this little part of the world. Although you are clever enough to see that you have missed something, you yet put that same little world continually in the foreground. It has doubtless given you a certain kind of happiness, just as my stagnant existence has bred in me a certain kind of contentment. But believe me, my dear child, the best thing that can happen to one is to have the world become, once in one’s life, a background.”

“I understand,” said Emily slowly.

“My sixty-odd years have taught me,” continued Mr. Driscoll in his

comfortable, meditative way, "that happiness is a very relative thing. In youth it consists in the power to be deceived by an optical illusion. When one's first freshness is gone it lies in the power of retrospection; and in middle age it undoubtedly dwells in one's comforts and one's food. You would have been delightful as an optically deluded person; much more so—please excuse me—than you are as a sensible one. You are too calculating, my dear Emily. Your clothes are too studied and your finger-nails are too brilliant. But you are the most charming woman I know."

She did not reply at once, but looked gravely into the depths of the fire. When she spoke again it was with a visible effort.

"Yes," she said, "that is just it. I should have touched your heart more if I had been pretty instead of clever. I'm sure I wish I had been. But do me, at least, the justice, worldling that I am, to say that I see through the veneer and appreciate the true mahogany."

Mr. Driscoll laughed. "Please God, I am mahogany. What is your respected Aunt Adelaide?"

"She is imitation gilt. Larry Wharncliffe is light oak, with brass knobs—on the corner of Fourteenth street, don't you know? Five pieces in a suite for forty-nine dollars and a half. I—well, I was meant to be Chippendale, but somehow I have degenerated into the most florid of upholstery. And, to go back to my original proposition, our varnish and our fiber may differ, but underneath we poor furnishings are all alike—uncompromising snobs."

"When you have got to my age, supported by that doctrine," said Mr. Driscoll, putting down his coffee-cup, "you will value people according to their differences. That is, you will value only those who are not of the ordinary upholstered parlor suite. There is"—he paused to light a fresh cigarette—"there is in this room at present a piece of the finest oak. Have you discovered it?"

Emily glanced over at the bridge-players and smiled. But Mr. Driscoll had seen that, before the glance, her answer had been ready.

"Dick?" she said.

"Yes, Dick."

"If you expect me to disagree with you, you will be disappointed. Remember, I have known him since we were both babies. We are almost of an age. We have been through many phases together. In fact, we are the best of friends."

"Yet, with even the inestimable advantage of your friendship, Dick somehow isn't satisfactory. You and I are perhaps the only two people who see that under his charm and his good nature, his friendliness and his geniality, there is something far more solid and strong than anything the world dreams of. When Dick left college my faith in him was great; I felt he would save someone at a fire, or write a good book. But no one's house happens to have burned, and he isn't the sort of man to write incog. The other day I suddenly realized that Dick was past thirty, and had drifted into the idlest, laziest, most unsatisfactory of lives. He has been sucked into the whirlpool, Emily. His soul is being killed by that all-devouring demon, New York."

"The demon has had a very good agent in Larry Wharncliffe," said Emily curtly. "It's the worst comment anyone can make on Dick that they live together. I used to think Larry an ass, I now find him a fool, and in the future he will probably turn out a knave."

"The best thing that could happen to Dick would be to lose his money," observed Mr. Driscoll. "Either to gamble it away, or to turn socialist and give it away. As it is, he is drifting into hopeless insignificance. And the crowning point will probably be a foolish marriage."

Emily rose, and stood with her back to the fire.

"Here come the fiends," she said carelessly.

The bridge-party had broken up and were strolling across the room, first

Mrs. Blair herself, a large, rather handsome woman of about fifty. She was built on an extended scale; and she wore overwhelming clothes, and had an immense fortune. Someone had once said that when she talked it was as bad as seeing an elephant frisk. She liked her friends to call her "Dillie," and for years had suffered with an unaccountable aversion to growing up—a passion for sitting on the floor, and letting down her back hair, and being playful.

With her was walking a dapper little man, with a big head and curly light hair. He had a high, shrill voice and very white, slender hands, which were in continual play. He had drawn one arm affectionately through Mrs. Blair's and was piloting her, a mass of black velvet and lace, to Mr. Driscoll's sofa.

Behind the two were another couple, the man of which, somehow, made one forget the woman. Richard Faxon looked, above everything, a gentleman; his best friends, with no idea of cynicism, admitted that he was one at first sight. He had more to back him than most people—birth, refinement, good taste and money. He had had the usual boyhood, the usual youth, and, despite a strength in him which somehow asserted itself as distinctly unusual, he appeared to be having the usual manhood. If one had tried to analyze this vague strength—this difference, as Emily Blair would have called it—one would have been at a loss. Quite illogically one was led, nevertheless, to hope that, where his companions were the rule, he was an exception. In their class they were successes; Richard Faxon seemed good enough to be a failure.

"The point where Dick will show," Mr. Casimir Driscoll had said, when the boy left Harvard after the usual career of athletics, escapades and debts, "is where responsibility comes to him. And the person who will develop him most will be the woman he marries."

Of home life Richard had had pitifully little since his boyhood. His parents had died early, and he had been an only child. Even as a boy he

had had no house at which to spend his holidays save his guardian's and Mrs. Jerry Blair's. That lady had always inspired him with a sort of tolerant amusement. For his distant cousin Emily—as lonely as he, in a certain sense, and his friend for as long as he could remember—he had one of the strong affections of his life. They had been close in almost every way, bound together by companionship, by taste and by tradition; even, in Dick's late boyhood, by the fact that he had idealized the young lady who was surprising society with her wit and cleverness, and had conceived a romantic affection for her. During his winter holidays, when he was twenty-one, Richard had implored her to elope with him; and Emily had laughed at him immoderately, and quoted his impassioned appeal in one of her best dinner-table stories. Now, some ten years later, it was Richard who joked over the episode; and Emily always laughed with him, but refused to comment on the matter one way or the other.

But friends they were, and in the sincerest way. Above all things, Emily Blair was tactful; and she was always prepared to listen when Dick was talkative, or to talk when he was silent. She was always ready for a brisk walk in the park or a day in the country. When Dick came to dinner she remembered what he liked to eat; when she and her aunt gave a ball she remembered the music he preferred. Once or twice she had even invited pretty girls, with whom he was having flirtations, to luncheon with her; and had telephoned for him, and disappeared discreetly herself when the meal was over. This last, however, had happened very recently, only since Emily had noticed the crow's feet that were gathering about her eyes.

She was watching him now, as he approached her from the other side of the room; and Mr. Casimir Driscoll was watching Richard's companion.

Some three months before, a family of three, father, son and daughter, had arrived in New York from the West, and settled in the marble palace of

a depleted stockbroker. Their cards, sent out for a reception immediately after, informed the world that they were Mr. Elias F. Gibbs, Mr. W. Harry Gibbs and Miss Myrtle P. Gibbs, popularly known as "Pinkie." Whoever and whatever the Gibbsses were, they had money, the father was a widower, and the son and daughter both unmarried; and someone stood sponsor for them, and Pinkie had a card for the Assembly. Since then it had been plain sailing. The father, who spent his days alone and procured a chaperon for his daughter in the person of a reduced gentlewoman, was pronounced a boor. But the son, by dint of sedulously imitating Larry Wharncliffe and identifying himself with one or two divorced ladies much in vogue, was found jolly; and Pinkie, with her fluffy fair hair and her wild spirits and her French dresses, made a *succès fou*. In the midst of her triumphs Richard Faxon had met her; and latterly several of Pinkie's admirers had fallen off, grumbling in their club windows that it was a deuced shame and that Faxon had money enough of his own.

Mr. Driscoll, after his scrutiny and before the last couple were within earshot, whispered to Emily:

"I hear the Gibbsses have an opera-box," he said.

She threw back her head with a motion that was characteristic of her.

"It is on the second tier," she replied a little stiffly.

"Well, we've finished our game, and Larry and I lost," sighed Mrs. Blair, collapsing on the sofa beside Mr. Driscoll. "I suppose I shall have to go without that hat at Marie's, Emily."

"All your fault, my dear, all your fault," said Larry Wharncliffe briskly. "Who wants a cigarette? If you'd returned my lead, we'd be all right now. I'm not dead stuck on Marie's hats, but she has awful pretty girls there. One that looks just like you, Miss Gibbs."

"How complimentary!" said Dick carelessly.

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Pinkie, settling herself in a comfortable chair

and tossing her gauze flounces to one side. "They have real good figures, those girls."

"They are certainly of a pleasing type," observed Emily, leaning against the mantelpiece, with Dick beside her, and surveying the group. "I especially like the way they dress their hair, don't you?"

"Really, Miss Blair, you make a room so chilly that I always feel like sneezing when you're around," Larry rattled on. "Say, Faxon, do you know that once when I came to see this cousin of yours and called her Emily—just for fun, you know—she rang for the butler, and told him to show me out and said I had evidently got into the wrong house by mistake. But I had my revenge on her!"

"What was that?" asked Dick, laughing.

"Why, I wrote her a note that night beginning 'My dear Emmie.'"

"And I," said Emily promptly, "had the kitchen-maid, who is very pretty, take it back to you at once, and say that her name was Katie, not Emmie, and that if you were so incautious as to compromise her again, she would lose her place."

"You are terribly clever, Emily," said Mrs. Blair admiringly. "You ought to have written a book."

"Yet my life has not been entirely wasted since I have so successfully snubbed Mr. Larry Wharncliffe."

"No one else has done it like you, sure!" observed that gentleman huffily.

Emily looked at him curiously. "Do you know, you are growing!" she said. "A year ago you wouldn't have admitted that even I could snub you!"

"That's right!" acquiesced Larry uneasily. Somehow, he always seemed limp beside Emily.

"If you don't look out, you will go on growing until you grow up," went on Emily, fanning herself slowly. "And if you become a man, and lose your impertinence, your instant downfall in society will follow."

The company were ominously silent for a moment. Then a sound came

from Mr. Driscoll which might have been interpreted by the disagreeable as a chuckle.

Emily turned to Pinkie.

"My aunt and I were so sorry your father could not drop in to dinner to-night. I especially like your father, Miss Gibbs."

"Oh, yes, he's all right," responded Pinkie. "He doesn't know much, father, but he's all right."

"Do you know, he strikes me as one of the few interesting men I have met this winter," pursued Emily, to Mr. Driscoll. "You must meet him, Mr. Casimir. He owns that famous mine, you remember, called the 'Tea Cup'; and his account of the work there and of the original discovery is simply a fairy tale. I almost decided to be a miner myself, when he told me of it, in addition to my other trades."

Now, to W. Harry and to Pinkie the Tea Cup Mine was the most dread family skeleton. Had not their father frankly professed shirt sleeves in those days? And did not its atmosphere still linger in his grammar? The girl colored, and tried to change the subject.

"I met Mrs. Carstairs today," she announced, trying to speak carelessly. It had been the summit of her ambition, this meeting; but she was observant enough to realize that it would be wise to let it seem unimportant.

"Did you?" said Mrs. Blair, raising her eyebrows a little. "She's dining here tomorrow. She does wear the sweetest clothes!"

"She's all right, Milly Carstairs, all right," put in Larry, reviving perceptibly. "Nice little woman, I call her."

"Milly?" said Mr. Driscoll. "Why, I thought Jack Carstairs was married to an Elizabeth."

Emily laughed. "Ah, yes, my dear Mr. Driscoll, but that was last winter! How very old-fashioned you are!"

"My father can't get over the way people are divorced here, either," observed Pinkie, glancing at Mr. Driscoll with a look that plainly said she wanted to make friends with him. "He says it's so hard on the men."

"Yet it is supposed to be the attractions of the men that are accountable for it," retorted Mr. Driscoll, smiling. "Don't you think so, Emily?"

"Not at all. I think it purely a class phase of the restlessness of the American people. In the lowest classes they emigrate. In the middle classes they chew gum. In the upper classes they divorce. We might all as well have moving-vans at our front doors forever."

"And the lowest classes aspire to chew gum, and the middle classes aspire to divorce," put in Dick, laughing.

"Exactly. I have the most perfect specimen who comes to treat my hair, named Gussie Regan. The other day she informed me that a young lady friend of hers, a Mrs. Jo Steinberg, had advanced very much in the social scale. She said, 'Oh, yes; she's got real classy, Maree! I shouldn't wonder if she was divorced one of these days.'"

"*Tout passe, tout casse*—" began Dick.

"And I have taken to writing Aunt Adelaide's visiting-list in pencil. It can be rubbed out so much more easily."

"Yes, what with scandals and Westerners, we get new blood in all the time," broke in Larry tartly.

Emily turned on him like a flash. "It is very clear that you have never been West," she said. "Your provinciality excuses you, Mr. Wharncliffe. Who is coming to dinner tomorrow with Mrs. Carstairs, Aunt Adelaide?"

"I am," returned Mr. Driscoll. "And I'm going to take you in."

"Oh, I don't know!" answered Mrs. Blair. "The list's somewhere. No one who plays bridge, I think. But Villon is going to sing for us in the evening. He sings awfully sweetly, Larry; have you heard him?"

"I guess I'm not much on noises of that sort," said Mr. Wharncliffe easily, lighting a cigarette. "Give me the Casino or Sousa's band, every time. I like a good Broadway show."

"Yes," retorted Emily gravely. "I should think you did. You gravitate to Broadway just as my Gussie Regan gravitates to Third avenue."

Dick burst out laughing.

"My dear Emily, be merciful as you are strong! Larry, you had better come home and have a drink. Why, you're not going, Miss Gibbs, are you?"

"I guess I'll have to be getting on," said Pinkie, who had risen. "My brother and I are going to a dance. It's at the Brooks'. Are you going, Miss Blair?"

"No," returned Emily, smiling. "My dancing days are over. I find I am more effective as a young matron than as a faded girl."

Pinkie held out her hand. There was an anxious look in her pale gray eyes.

"I hope you'll come to see me soon," she went on. "I—I wish you'd call me Pinkie; and I'd like awfully to call you Emily."

Emily glanced swiftly at Richard and saw that his eyes were on the little blond head which was just on a level with her own shoulder; she saw, too, that the head was turned in his direction: and in that moment she realized that the decree of fate was cast.

"Yes, with pleasure," she answered, a touch of real cordiality in her voice. "Pinkie isn't your real name, is it?"

"No. My real name's Myrtle. But I like Pinkie best."

"Perhaps it is easier for everyday use. Certainly I will come to see you; and I hope you will drop in quietly for tea with me some afternoon, so that we can get to know each other. Dick's friends"—she turned to her cousin—"are always mine."

The girl colored again. With Emily she was obviously ill at ease; yet she had been the gayest and noisiest of the bridge-party.

"We're all going to the circus Friday," she remarked. "My brother Harry, and Mr. Wharncliffe, and Mr. Faxon; and your aunt says she'll chaperon us. Perhaps—perhaps you'll come too?"

Mr. Driscoll rose and came forward.

"There is where I dispute your point, Miss Gibbs," he said, bowing with a vague, old-time charm which somehow clung to him. "Miss Blair is going to dine with me at my apartment on Friday. You may have the whole of New York, but you cannot have Miss Blair. She is my especial property."

The party broke up. Larry Wharncliffe said he was off to a show. Pinkie was bound homeward, to change her frock before going on to her dance. Richard hesitated.

"By the way, Dick," Mr. Driscoll asked him carelessly, "walk up to the club with me, will you? I want to talk over some business."

"With pleasure, of course," said Dick half regretfully. "I'll see Miss Gibbs to her carriage, and meet you downstairs."

They filed out. Mrs. Blair went into the hall and called parting protestations to Larry that she *had* led up to his long suit; and Emily and Mr. Driscoll were left alone.

He took her hand, and held it affectionately for a moment.

"Myrtle!" he said.

She laughed uneasily. "It's almost worse than Pinkie. But I'm afraid Dick is going to do it."

"God help him if he does. You could never go to see them, Emily. With you, she gives one the impression of sitting on the extreme edge of her chair and wearing a dress that is too tight."

"We can't tell, Mr. Driscoll. That girl is no fool; and Dick needs development."

Mr. Driscoll sighed. "Well, you are broad-minded. Personally, I should give them about three years in which to make a very hopeless mess of it. There can be no possible sympathy or companionship between them."

"She may develop. I don't think she is bad enough to be a failure."

"Ah, yes, my dear, but that is very different from being good enough to be a success!"

Emily thought for a moment. "One

or the other of them will knock under," she said prophetically.

"Yes. Either Dick will require, or be required of. He is a strong man, Emily."

"But she is a pretty woman!"

"And you," went on Mr. Driscoll, glancing at her keenly, "are bound to make the best of it."

"Oh, well!" said Emily, shrugging her shoulders, "I was bound to hate Dick's wife, you know. Just as I should have been bound to be jealous of your daughters, if you had had any."

"I always knew that something celestial had inspired me to be an old bachelor, my dear. Good night. Why is life always at sixes and sevens? I'll go to the club and try to think it out."

"And I," responded Emily, "will go upstairs and study mental arithmetic."

When her aunt came in, a few moments later, to bid her good night, she was engrossed in a book in front of the fire.

"I should think you'd be too tired to read after all you've done today," observed Mrs. Blair querulously. "Dear me, what a success your dress is, Emily! Did you ever see such pearls as that child has? They're too sweet. It would be an awfully good match for Dick."

"She certainly has money, Aunt Adelaide."

"Oh, well, what else counts, nowadays? The only objection I can see is that she'd probably name the first child Birdie. Don't stay up too long, and ring when you want the lights put out. What's your book?"

"Herbert Spencer."

Mrs. Blair gave her niece a look of concentrated horror, and disappeared.

As soon as Emily was alone, however, Herbert Spencer slipped to the floor, and she sat gazing into the fire until long past midnight.

II

SOMEONE with a romantic turn of mind had once started a tale that Mr. Casimir Driscoll had had a love affair.

When the rumor had reached his ears that gentleman had laughed, and observed that one of the greatest curses in the world was no sense of congruity.

One never, somehow, imagined Mr. Driscoll as ever having been young. He seemed to have been born developed. His portliness, his solidity, his knowledge of not only his world, but the world—a wisdom far rarer, by the way, than the commonplace fancy it—seemed as much part and parcel of him as his years. He was the kind of person whose looks never change; he aged very little as his life slipped along. Yet those who remembered back to his somewhat incongruous youth recollected that he had grown old very young.

His life, never cast for brilliant lines, had slowly molded itself into a fixture of his club windows. Winter and summer, all of the day and most of the night, Mr. Driscoll was to be seen lolling back in his particular chair, his hat on the back of his head, a cigar in one corner of his mouth, and a glass of whisky-and-soda beside him. His lot had been surprisingly uneventful; and a cleverness which, with certain incentives, might have made its mark, had showed itself in making him the shrewdest of observers.

Only two people vied with his club window in his affections, and these were Emily Blair and Richard Faxon.

In neither instance was it an affection bred by antecedents. He had not had card debts with Dick's father, nor been secretly in love with Emily's mother. It was a plain case of interest. From his contemplative corner, looking out into the thick of things, Mr. Driscoll had seen the two young lives forming, and had banked a good deal of his somewhat belated tenderness on them. They were made of good stuff, he would have said—had sprung from a good stock, and had good traditions behind them. They were modern—but they were fine; and the old gentleman ticketed this as unusual. He had worked his way to Richard's confidence, and he hovered about Emily like a guardian angel of uncertain age but developed

spiritually—neither a young nor angelic enough angel to flit by her side, he told her; but one who knew he had the gout, and was wise enough to sit still and watch, and to give her the benefit of his observations.

Mr. Driscoll always prided himself on being an equable man; so that, notwithstanding that he was distinctly out of temper with fate, he opened fire on Richard in his usual meditative way on the night of the bridge-party, when they left Mrs. Jerry Blair's door.

"It has often occurred to me, my dear Dick," he began as they walked along together under the clear, cold starlight, "that the best way to progress in this world is never to give advice. I, however, have come to the point on my journey where the road not only retrogresses but runs downhill; so I am going to make you hate me, and tell you that you are about to make an awful fool of yourself."

Dick plunged his hands deeper into the pockets of his fur coat, chewed his cigar pensively, and did not reply.

"Now, my dear fellow, believe me, it isn't from the worldly point of view that I'm speaking. I have not lingered on the thought that her mother was probably a washerwoman, and that her nickname is Pinkie—worse still, perhaps, that her genuine name is Myrtle. I'm looking at it from the standpoint of your development—of your future happiness, and of that of your children. You have a fine old name behind you, Dick. I knew your father, your grandfather and your great-grandfather. They were the best this country breeds—strong, true and of sterling honor. Behind them, again, were generations of good stock, which had held its head high and kept its faith with God and man. A man doesn't come of such a stock without responsibility; and the chief responsibility is not to yourself but to your children."

"The truth is, Mr. Driscoll, that love is such an impossibility in our class that you cannot recognize it," retorted Dick pleasantly. "I knew this would happen, the moment I found myself beginning to care for Miss Gibbs.

I knew that all of you, and more especially you and Emily would preach to me on the subject of birth. I like an old name, too; but I like the woman I love for what she is, not for what her people are."

Mr. Casimir sighed.

"But love almost never lasts with an impossibility of companionship and comprehension. In the rare cases where it survives the handicap of antagonistic standpoints, one character is determined enough to act as either a lever or a debaser on the other. Excuse me, my dear boy, but, whichever of you two would be the debaser, I don't think either of you quite of the type to be a lever. You would be madly happy for a few months, then become bored, and end in a divorce court; and your excuse would be that everyone else does the same. You"—he laid his hand on Richard's shoulder—"you, Dick, are not ordinary enough to do so ordinary a thing."

They walked on in silence for a few moments. Their steps rang out, measured and even, on the icy pavements. The streets were almost deserted, save for a few hurrying passers-by; and a winter moon, hanging between the ghostly towers of the cathedral, cast a strange pallor on the shivering figures.

At last Dick spoke again, with a note of strong gravity in his voice. There was an almost unpleasant ring of determination in it.

"My dear Mr. Driscoll, I value your advice—next, perhaps, to Emily's—more than anyone else's on earth. But in this case I honestly and truly feel you are wrong, and I am going to prove it to you. I have not yet asked Miss Gibbs to marry me, but I mean to. And if she will trust her future in my hands, I will do all in my power to make her happy."

Mr. Casimir sighed again. "That is the finest thing I have ever heard you say, Dick, and the manliest. If you will do it, good luck go with you. I hope to God it'll come out all right. Have you a match?"

"You see," went on Dick, stopping for a moment and striking a light for

the older man's cigar, "I've realized for a long time that my life here was pretty useless and trashy. Which one of us does anything but loaf at the club all day and fool about women in the evening? Look at Larry, now; he's a good-hearted sort of chap, but he's an awful snob. It's a snobbish life, Mr. Driscoll, and a mighty insincere one. If all goes well with me—with us—I hope some day to break away from it."

Mr. Driscoll thought of the newly acquired opera-box, and grunted skeptically.

"I shouldn't want to bury my wife, but I should rather breathe in a more wholesome atmosphere. It taints the finest men and women—this greed, this hurry, this superficiality. It's tainted even Emily a little."

"Emily doesn't lack character to withdraw from the mob," said Mr. Driscoll curtly. "She doesn't lack character to do anything on earth she pleases. If conditions had been different, she would have held herself apart and cut down her many superficialities to a few real interests, and really lived."

"Well, why hasn't she, then?"

"What our men and women want," continued Mr. Driscoll evasively, "is not to leave New York, but to withdraw from New York; to stand aside, and forswear rush—to do one thing a day instead of thirty, and to understand that one thing thoroughly. It is first of all superficiality which is degenerating our race; and, secondly, it is hurry. If I could work the reformation of my fellow-citizens, I should begin by suppressing clocks; and I should follow that up by a wholesale bonfire of sectarian preachers, crowded cable cars, department stores, and soda water fountains."

Dick laughed. "Yes. But why hasn't Emily gotten out of it?"

Mr. Driscoll shrugged his portly shoulders. "Who knows? Possibly"—he smiled rather quizzically—"possibly she thought she could take a firmer stand by being the one intelligent person in the whole glaring, gorgeous, battered caravansary, and thus

constituting a sort of moral life-saving station."

"I don't know anyone whom I feel would be a better friend for my wife than Emily," observed Dick thoughtfully. "She is, as you say, a sort of moral life-saving station. She is so understanding and so true; and the finest thing about her is that she is a genuine woman. I often wish she would marry. Do you suppose she has ever been in love?"

Mr. Driscoll hesitated for the smallest instant.

"No," he said deliberately, "I don't. But she is the sort of person who will do something very heroic—live heroically, love heroically, or die heroically. I am not enough behind the scenes to tell exactly which it will be. But it will be worth seeing, and I'm going to have a seat in the front row."

They were both still thinking of Emily Blair when they parted at Mr. Driscoll's club, a few moments later.

"I'm not coming in," said Dick, holding out his hand. "I'm going on to the Gibbsses'. She—she's out, but I want to see her father. It'll be a beastly sort of interview, I suppose. Pray for me."

Mr. Driscoll shook hands. He glanced from his club to the cathedral opposite it, and from the cathedral back to his club.

"I will, my dear boy. But my altar will be my leather chair, and my burnt-offering will be whisky-and-soda. I am ending my days in the shadow of the church, you see. Good night. Good luck to you."

When Mr. Elias F. Gibbs had struck ore in the Tea Cup Mine he had gone to the nearest saloon, taken a stiff drink, and thanked God. But he had taken the drink first.

He was a simple man, with instincts so primitive that civilization had not warped him, and a nature so fine that prosperity had not spoiled him. He had done good work, and had done it with his hands; consequently he was genuinely proud of it. If it had

been clever work, and he had done it with his brain, he might have been vain of it. Somehow, in these brocaded rooms, he seemed a very lonely creature. One missed for him a background of forests, of sweeping plains, of a rugged soil, of a clear, cold wind, and of simplicity.

Like most simple men he had a heart, and that heart had been genuinely broken when his young wife died. There was a continual far-away look in his sharp blue eyes which had been stamped there one bleak winter day, many years before—the snow cleared from a rough hole in the frozen ground, the dark, naked trees rattling overhead, a gray, leaden sky over all; and, in the open grave about which the miners were grouped, leaning on their pick-axes, a rough white box which held not only the body of Mary Gibbs, but also her husband's heart.

When he found himself a rich man he had shrunk away, rather wearily, from his new responsibility. For himself, all he wanted was a comfortable fireside, plenty of tobacco, and peace. But his wife had left him two little children; and a stray Easterner, looking over the Tea Cup Mine, and becoming interested in the motherless girl and boy, told Gibbs that they ought to be schooled.

The result of education was the white marble palace in New York; and Mr. Gibbs sometimes wondered, with a sigh, if this young lady, with her new jewels and her newer accent, was indeed the little girl for whom his own nickname had been "Popsy"; and if W. Harry Gibbs, member of the Knickerbocker Club and leader of innumerable cotillions, was one and the same with the hard, brown, grimy urchin who had played around the mouth of the Tea Cup Mine, and been familiarly hailed by the rising city of Gibbsville as "Mick."

It takes the gentility, not only of one's forebears, but of years of one's own lifetime, to survive the degrading influences which go with newly acquired poverty; and, in the same way, it takes a deeply rooted simplicity to

survive, in a son of the soil, the contamination of new wealth. Personally, Mr. Gibbs found that grandeur bored him excessively. He was too simple to push himself, too frankly shy to make new friends; and, beyond drawing his cheques and reading his Western newspapers, he found himself very idle. Every month or so, he would suggest a holiday for himself and a quiet trip to Gibbsville. But Mr. Gibbs's offspring had become so prominent that the society papers would be sure to mention their father's departure; and, while Mr. Gibbs, of Gibbsville, sounded rather well, what horrible things could not be unearthed if one went back to antecedents? So the tall, rawboned man lived his life in his library—not, he explained, on account of the books, but because the furniture was less slippery there than elsewhere in the house—vaguely regretting his old ways, vastly admiring his children, and afraid of his servants. He moved about the room with a strange energy and freedom which were apt to break the numberless ornaments in his path. He was no idealistic person, Mr. Elias F. Gibbs; and he frankly preferred cheap novels, with scarlet covers, to the eighteenth-century bindings with which a decorator had lined his walls.

On this evening Richard Faxon found him in front of a huge fire, his feet on the end of a table, comfortably chewing tobacco, and deep in a volume entitled "Love and the Volcano's Mouth."

"How are you?" said Gibbs cordially, jerking a chair forward. "Glad to see you. Pinkie's out."

"I knew your daughter was out," returned Dick, shaking hands. "But I wanted to see you, sir—on business."

Gibbs banged his book shut.

"Pinkie's always out, it seems to me," he remarked gloomily. "I don't much guess people are ever in—in New York."

"It is a very active life; and especially so when one is as young and charming as your daughter."

"I wish it would use itself up on the

young ones, then, and give old, worn-out chaps like me the go-by. I don't mind a lively life—I like it. But the sort of thing that works you as if you were a machine and never leaves you any peace is too much for me. I tell Pinkie and Harry that I'm not modern, and they say I'm not New York. They think it's just great. I—" Gibbs smiled, his keen eyes closing up and his seared face wrinkling—"I think it's just hell."

"Why don't you leave it, sir?"

"Well, what's the use of money if you don't stand around and watch it being spent? My children spend, but they show up for it all right. Every now and then I go back to Gibbsville, and get my lungs full of fresh air. By the way, you said you wanted to see me on business. Anything in the mining line? If you can stand work, I can give you a berth in the Tea Cup."

Dick grew a little pale. "It isn't a place in your mine that I want, Mr. Gibbs, but something else of yours. I want to tell you that I'm going to ask your daughter to marry me."

Gibbs sat up suddenly. "Good God!" he said; and then he spat neatly into the fire.

There was silence for a moment.

"If you want recommendations—" began Dick nervously.

"It's not that, it's not that. What strikes me is that you speak to *me* before Pinkie; but I guess you're right, just the same. It seems straight, somehow." Gibbs sighed, and gazed pensively at the ceiling. "She's had a lot of others, but somehow I never thought of it from you. But it's for her to say. She knows her own mind, Pinkie does. She'll fix it herself."

"I love your daughter very much," said Richard Faxon simply; "and if she will let me, I mean to make her a good husband."

Gibbs eyed him curiously.

"Look here, young man, what do you do for your living?" he asked.

"It hasn't been necessary for me to do anything, Mr. Gibbs. I have inherited——"

"That's it!" He struck the table

heavily with his fist. "You've not had to work. I'm a straight man, and I tell you straight that I don't put much trust in a man that don't know how to work. Of course, I know that some day it'll come to Pinkie's leaving me. It's bound to. Pinkie's elegant, I don't deny it—Pinkie's elegant. But she's about the best I've got left on earth, and I wish to God she was going to marry a workingman. Look at me!" He jerked up his sleeve and stretched out a hard, brown arm. "I started in life with *that*—and nothing else. I worked trundling stones till I could manage to buy a pickaxe. I made a home for my wife by slaving for over two years, till my hands bled and my hair began to bleach. I've worked. And if work don't always make a man a gentleman, at least it makes him a man, Mr. Faxon."

Dick's eyes flashed. "There is no one who would be prouder of—of your daughter's father than I, sir."

Gibbs relapsed into his former position. "Well, I believe that. It shows you're made of the true stuff. I'd rather you did something, as I say; but if Pinkie will take you, I guess you can have her. Somehow, I've always wanted her to marry in the West. We make fine men there. But life is a mixy thing, and perhaps she fits in better here, after all." He fell to chewing his tobacco again, his rough hands clasped behind his head and his gaze in the blazing fire. "I thought the East a poor place when I first came here, and I think it a good sight poorer now. The future of this country, Mr. Faxon, lies out on those plains where I hail from. We may not have the show—we may not have your marble houses and your tastiness and your artistic things—but, by George, we've got the backbone!"

"I've seen one or two great men who came from the West."

"Yes, and we'll produce more. I've seen fine men grow up there myself. The most of them started without a red cent—without anything but grit, health and brains, as I told you. They didn't only get rich, but they got great."

They had all the pitfalls, all the dangers, all the temptations that come to great men, too. You see, the trouble is that as soon as a man begins to grow, he knows it; and he excuses himself for lots of small meanesses by saying that big people usually have a few little vices. It's hard to stand failure, Mr. Faxon, but it's a good sight harder to stand success."

"How about you and Gibbsville?" asked Dick, laughing.

"Well, some day I'd like you to come to Gibbsville. When I first saw the spot where the First Baptist Church now stands it was a waste of dirty sand. We've got ten thousand souls population, we've got a bank, and a town water supply, and I shouldn't wonder if next year we had trolleys. No, I'm Gibbsville, and I'm going to make Gibbsville solid. It's going to succeed, but it's going to last, too. I only wish my children liked it better. Pinkie used to be real fond of it when she was a little tot. I wonder—I sort of wonder how you two would hit it off!" His blue eyes turned on Richard again. "What will your people say, now?"

"I have almost no relatives," said Dick; "and I haven't seen much of my guardians since I came of age."

"That Miss Blair, now, that I've seen once or twice," continued Gibbs, chewing thoughtfully. "Miss Emily Blair, your cousin. What'll she think of it?"

"I really don't know."

"If you don't mind, I'd like to talk it over with Miss Blair. She's got a head on her shoulders, that young woman; and she's a true lady, too. She's the right sort. Of course, Pinkie will settle it any way she pleases; but somehow I'd like to talk it over with Miss Blair."

"My cousin is my most intimate friend, and one of the best and finest of women, Mr. Gibbs. But you may find her—prejudiced. Remember that she has lived here all her life, and would perhaps resent my not marrying a New Yorker. You know, we are very provincial here, in our way."

"It's no good, this city," said Gibbs wearily. "I know that. No, she won't be prejudiced, your cousin. She'll tell me the truth, and she'll tell me frankly. She's no fool. If she thought you and Pinkie'd scrap, she'd say so, straight. I know her kind. My wife was like that."

Dick had risen to go, and the elder man rose too, and clasped his hand for a moment.

"Good luck to you, my boy," he said. "I hope she'll have you. Pinkie's a fine girl; but just you take my word for it, some day you'll stand a much better chance of happiness if you get to work."

III

LIFE had been, to Emily Blair, ever since the days when she first began to think, an eminently interesting thing. Her chief passion, she always said, was people. When she was gay, when she was sad, when she was fresh with energy, when she was tired and dragged, her outlet was to walk the crowded streets, seeking absorption and diversion in the faces hurrying past her. There is perhaps no city in the world so full of glimpses of human interests as New York; its very polyglot quality gives it a scope and a diversity of which few other communities can boast. The American element in itself is interesting enough. But when one adds a practically immeasurable mixture of every European country and of almost every European class, the kaleidoscopic effect becomes inconceivable; and one has the sense of being in a vast playhouse, with sight and sound and touch of every climate about one, and on the stage the great background of humanity.

In her own mind, Emily had always made the distinction that she was different from her class. She was too intelligent a person to let this consciousness turn her head; and she was a clever enough one to realize that, given her determination of character, she ought to have been more different

still. The power of insight always brings its responsibilities; and when Emily once understood her world she saw how heavy would be the responsibility of understanding herself. If one thinks at all, New York is the hardest place in the world in which to keep one's self-respect. It is not that the people lack cleverness—they are too clever; it is not that they lack intelligence—they are too intelligent. Everything and everybody is superlative; and the result is that thousands of human lives, thousands of human interests, and thousands of human talents—things each one in itself far too good to be wasted—are whirled together into the caldron of an incredibly active rush, and the only thing that results is an appalling superficiality.

As Mr. Casimir Driscoll, who was a thoughtful man, had said to Richard, what people need is not to leave New York, but to withdraw from it; to realize the calm of sitting quietly by one's fireside; to be able to see the beauty of the sky as one walks along the streets, to stop being competitive, and become contemplative. In a tiny town among the Italian hills, where one of the greatest and deepest of human lives was once led, they have organized an order of men and women who live out in the world, in the thick of things, and yet have the bonds of faith and precept upon them; and one of the chief rules of that order is that its votaries shall never speak of time. Turn from the simplicity of this rule to the glare, the rush, the passion—the splendor, if you will—of the greatest of American cities, and see if you do not feel that, while men have filled their pockets, they have emptied their souls.

Someone had once asked Emily Blair how she would define the word *success*; and after a good deal of thought she had replied, *comprehension*. That people which understands itself, that people which spends a lifetime in the following of one true task instead of a hundred useless ones, that people which really lives, will, in the

searchlight of a vaster intelligence, really succeed.

It had been Emily's great disappointment in life that Richard Faxon had been dominated by his surroundings. She had expected more of him than had anyone else, for she was a woman, and she had an imagination. When Richard, in his genial, easy way, had seemed rather to enjoy becoming a nonentity, Emily had felt something change within her. She had become accustomed to being disappointed in herself; she could never become accustomed, she felt almost passionately, to being disappointed in Dick.

To the world at large, indeed, this possible marriage seemed a very good thing. True, one of Richard's ex-guardians, an old gentleman with gout and decided ideas as to Knickerbocker history, wrote to Emily, as soon as the rumor began to be general, and begged her to remonstrate with her cousin. Emily herself was almost surprised, when she thought it over afterward, at her absolute and almost curt refusal. But Dick's private business was not hers, she had said, and his wife was not to be of her choosing; and she flung herself into the gaiety of a New York December and read Herbert Spencer a great deal as the next days passed.

One afternoon she was rather surprised to have Mr. Elias Gibbs's card brought to her. She was in front of her own sitting-room fire; and, after a moment's thought, she sent to ask him to come upstairs, and ordered herself denied to other visitors.

"I asked you to come here," she said cordially, when that gentleman, very tall and gaunt in his frock-coat, appeared in the doorway, "because we must start on a friendly basis. I am more and more convinced that some day we shall become relations-at-law."

Gibbs drew up a chair, seated himself, and crossed his legs comfortably.

"I guess that's about the size of it now," he remarked.

"Ah!" said Emily quickly.

She glanced at him sharply for a moment; then she rose and rang the bell.

"Will you have some tea? Or at

least I will, and you can if you want to. I remember that you rather like tea, very strong, with cream and one piece of sugar. My success in life, Mr. Gibbs, has consisted in my remembering how people take their tea. There is always something so insidiously flattering about it. So the engagement is an accomplished fact, is it?"

"They spliced it this morning," began Gibbs, obviously wishing for tobacco. "Pinkie says he asked her in Central Park. Then they came home and told me, and I've come to tell you. They're to meet me here at six o'clock."

Emily twisted her little chain of pearls slowly about her fingers. She was rather paler than usual.

"It seems only yesterday that he was a little boy," she said unoriginally. "I—when did it happen, did you say?"

"This afternoon."

"Yes. Well, Mr. Gibbs, are you sorry to lose her?"

"About as sorry to lose her as you are to lose him, Miss Blair."

"I *am* dreadfully sorry to lose Dick," said Emily slowly. "Dreadfully sorry. It is egotistical, I know; but it is part of my life—gone. However, your regrets and mine will be lost in the general joy. Let us hope that they may be very happy."

"That's just what I want to know." Gibbs leaned forward, looking her over with his keen, sharp eyes. "What do you think it's going to come to?"

Emily, in her turn, leaned back in her chair; somehow, she seemed to avoid his glance. She clasped her hands behind her head and gazed into the fire.

"Truthfully?"

"Yes, Miss Blair, straight."

"Well—you see, Mr. Gibbs, it is hard for me to say. I know Dick, and I don't know your daughter."

Gibbs sighed. "It's as a pair that I mean. It's how they're going to pull together. Now, Pinkie's just about all right, as far as I can see. She's fond of her own way, but what pretty young woman isn't? And she's a trifle too fond of money—but that hasn't mat-

tered with me. She's got a clear head, Pinkie, and she knows what she wants. As for your cousin, he's a fine man; there's no doubt about it. He hasn't worked, of course, but among your lot of people it don't seem to be the fashion to work. He's true, and he's straight, and he's honest. But the combination is the question."

"Yes. The combination is the question."

"I suppose Faxon's only family is you and your aunt. Let's take her first. What does she think?"

"My dear Mr. Gibbs," said Emily drily, "you forget that your daughter is very rich. My aunt is naturally pleased at that side of it; beyond that side of it, I don't know that she has looked. She doesn't know Dick at all well. You see, she is so charming a woman that she has spent all her life entertaining and being entertained."

"I see. Yes, she's a fine woman, your aunt; she's a fine woman, sure," said Gibbs meditatively. "But now come down to yourself. And tell the truth. I don't ever like beating about the bush. I want the truth straight."

"I should say, then, if you want the truth," said Emily deliberately, "that the chances are very much against your daughter's and Dick's happiness. You yourself must recognize that they start from totally different standpoints, with totally different interests—and possibly totally different ambitions. They are not—of the same sort. In certain ways, your daughter is probably a finer woman than my cousin is a man. But his tastes, as he grows older and steadier, will probably bore her, and her present life will finish the development in her of a social ambition that will probably bore him. I think I should call the whole matter a serious risk. However, the thing to do is not to croak, but to help them along in every possible way."

Gibbs rose suddenly and came over to Emily's chair.

"Shake hands, will you?" he said. "That was a hard thing for you to do, and you did it well. You're all right, Miss Blair."

Emily smiled. "Yes, it was a difficult thing to tell you. The whole affair has been a perplexing one. But now that Dick has decided it, and your daughter is willing to marry him, let us make the most of the happy side. I—I think that her future is in more danger than his, Mr. Gibbs; and I am doing all the complaining."

"How do you mean?"

Her brow wrinkled. "It is very hard to explain to anyone who has not known Dick from the start. You see, we—his friends—have all felt that he would amount to something. If his marriage is happy—if they have children, and he makes a good husband, he *will* be doing one of the finest things a man can do. But suppose—suppose certain ambitions and developments arise in Dick which tend to lead him away from this life—from its glare and insufficiency, from even its gaiety and charm; it naturally follows that he will be led away from the life your daughter likes, and that they will become antagonistic, more or less. You see, your daughter, although she isn't a native here, is the sort of person who embodies this city. Dick is, so to speak, marrying New York. Will he ever want to break away? That is the question. If he does, he will break away hard, Mr. Gibbs. He is a strong man."

"H'm! Well, a dentist's tooth-pulling machine wouldn't get Pinkie away from Fifth avenue," said Gibbs curtly, stirring his tea and watching Emily closely.

"You follow me there? Now, then, the whole question, to my mind, is—will Dick ever rise above and away from his life here? The chance of salvation for them both will be if he does not."

"I see. That's a smart point, Miss Blair. You ought to have been a lawyer. You mean that if your cousin goes under, they'll look at things from the same standpoint, and that if he does nothing with his life, they'll stand a better chance as New Yorkers than as—"

"Individuals. Yes, that is what I

mean. The best thing that can happen for your daughter's happiness, in my opinion, is that Dick should be drawn into the whirlpool—entirely. He is very nearly there now. Fish of a feather—one might say."

"Then no matter what happened, they'd take it the way everyone takes everything in that class of yours—excuse me, please. They'd live and die like everyone about them."

"They probably would. She would very likely go her way and he his."

"They might"—Gibbs's blue eyes twinkled—"they might even get divorced, if it happened to be fashionable some year, I suppose. Can I have some more tea?"

"My dear friend, you're going ahead too fast," remonstrated Emily, laughing. "But the point holds, all the same. If they were divorced, they'd probably take it very calmly—just as the rest of us do."

Gibbs took his cup from her. "As far as I can see, then, it's a toss-up. It's Pinkie's happiness or your cousin's development. Which"—he laid his big hand kindly on hers—"which do you bet on?"

"Ah, I'm afraid my head and my heart go different ways there! I believe they'll live in the whirlpool, Mr. Gibbs. But deep down in my heart, I always hope and pray that Dick will do something. I'm no saint, you see, and I'm very fond of him."

"Pinkie could never play up to him, if he once got started," observed Gibbs, in his pensive way.

"No, she couldn't. They are not—of a size. And she is fine enough to be made very unhappy, let me tell you. She's no fool, your daughter. It's rather a pity that she isn't, too."

They were both thoughtful for a moment. Then Gibbs looked up.

"I wish you'd known my wife!" he said.

Emily's eyes filled suddenly.

"I wish I had. Will you tell me something about her?"

Gibbs did not speak at once. He walked over to the window and stood, looking out of it, with his back to Em-

ily. When he turned to her again there was a stiff set to his shoulders.

"She was about the finest woman God ever made, my wife," he said. "She was straight and true, right through her life and her death. She had a lot to put up with, too. I wasn't as well brought up or schooled as she, and she was worth much more than I could give her. We began on nothing—and the year she died I was a rich man. But those things never made any difference to Mary. She was just one of those people whom you know will act straight by whatever comes to them. I—well, I haven't cared for many things in my life, but I did care for Mary." He gave a sharp, quick sigh. "I often look at men here, in this city, and wonder if any one of them wouldn't perhaps as soon lose his wife as not. Women are all amusement here, and nothing else. If it isn't one, it's another. But when anyone cared as much as I cared——"

"I know," said Emily slowly.

"It's not a just world," said Gibbs, his keen eyes fixed on the fire, "and all you can do is to be as just as you can to it. Mary used to say that. She said that to me when she was dying. 'You've acted fair all your life,' she said. 'Act fair to the end, Elias. The world may be unjust to you, but you try to be just to it.'"

Emily nodded. "I think your wife must have felt, Mr. Gibbs."

"Yes. She cared a lot when she cared at all, Mary did. And she was so pretty, Miss Blair! When she laughed her eyes sort of crinkled up at the corners. Have you ever seen anyone's eyes do that?" He turned and looked at her critically. "Do you know, I sometimes think you've got some of the same stuff in you that Mary had in her. You couldn't be finer than to be like her. She was a happier woman than you, though."

Emily gave a little laugh. "I am a happy person, too, in my way; but I am happy in spite of my surroundings, not because of them."

"Why don't you do something with that brain of yours besides making

people laugh at dinner?" asked Gibbs, smiling.

"That is a big question. My life has gradually dominated me, in a way. It would take an earthquake to dislodge me from my habits now."

"Would a volcano do?"

"Anything sufficiently violent would do. And, after all, we can none of us herald the future, and I may yet be upset into activity. Ah, here is someone coming up the stairs! Perhaps Dick and your daughter have arrived."

A moment later a servant knocked at the door, to say that Miss Gibbs was waiting below for her father to join her and go to Mrs. Blair in the drawing-room; Mr. Faxon, too, was downstairs.

"You must go and help break the news to Aunt Adelaide," said Emily, holding out her hand. "Send Dick up here to me, will you? I have a fancy I should like to congratulate him alone. And thank you very much for taking an interest in my neglected talents."

Gibbs took her hand between both of his.

"Yes, you're worth something more than this life, Miss Blair. And I'll bet on your being something more, some day, too. I hope I'll see you often. I like you."

She drew aside the door curtains for him, and busied herself with their folds that he might not see how her lips trembled.

"And I," she responded lightly, "like you. So come again, and often."

When he had gone she moved over to the window and stood looking out. A light snow was falling, and the street lamps were beginning to twinkle, blurred and dim. An overpowering desire came over her to get into the fresh air—to be alone, out in the night—alone with her own thoughts, away from the closeness and the heat, the glare and the pain.

She closed the curtains and stood waiting in the darkened room, with only the flickering firelight on her face. She was glad there was no light, somehow. It was not like her to be tired

and overwrought; but she was not herself this afternoon.

Then, waiting for Dick to bring her his happiness, she went back over their years of companionship. She seemed to see his boyhood, to hear his rollicking laugh and his fresh, bright voice; she seemed to see the first touch of his manhood, strong and clean, as it developed him and molded him. She even thought of the earnest look in his eyes on the day when he had told her he loved her, and remembered how hurt he had been with her for laughing at him.

"Dick, Dick," she had said—she could almost hear herself—"it's too soon for you to know. You'll get over it—you'll get over it, and laugh at yourself, some day."

Could this be that same Dick who came bounding up the stairs three steps at a time? With a sudden lump in her throat Emily turned to the door.

He caught her hands in his and stood looking at her, smiling through the dusk.

"Why are you in the dark, Emily?" he said. "You give one the creeps. I want you to see my face. I want you to see how happy I am."

"I'm in the dark, my dear boy, because I've been crying, and I don't want you to see how seared I look with rivulets through my rouge. Mr. Gibbs has told me; and it isn't that I'm crying at losing you——"

"I know," said Dick. "I understand. Well, I'm very, very happy. Wish me joy, Emily."

"Indeed, I do, with all my heart and soul. I wish you every joy, Dick. There is no one whose happiness is more bound up in mine than yours."

"I want you to love Pinkie on her own account, too. She is the dearest little thing in the whole world, Emily. I sometimes think she is rather afraid of you. You're such a finished, worldly-wise person, you know. But you must make friends with her—for my sake, and for her own, too. Aunt Adelaide seems delighted. Mr. Driscoll"—he laughed—"I can only call acquiescent.

And you—you are always the same dear old Emily."

She gave his hands a friendly little squeeze, and then drew her own away.

"Of course, I'm always the same old Emily to you, Dick. And equally, of course, your wife will have my friendship. It's a foregone conclusion. I've stood by you in the thick of everyday things; I'll stand by you in your happiness; and when your cooks leave, and your income diminishes, I'll stand by you in your troubles."

"I believe you will," Dick answered slowly. He was watching her keenly. It had distinctly struck him that she was not quite herself. She seemed strained—over-nervous, somehow.

He was silent for a moment; then he took up her mood.

"Yes, you and I haven't been best friends all these years for nothing. And Pinkie and I will probably begin our household troubles very soon. We're to be married in the spring, and go to Newport for the summer. Pinkie's wild to be there, and I want to give her all the fun I can. Will you come and stop with us, and help me? Then in the autumn I want to take her abroad——"

"Stop, stop! I haven't reached the wedding dress yet. You will be very amusing as a family man, my dear cousin. You will be so grave and overburdened, and, in your pleasant way, so enragingly didactic. I think I shall pity your wife, Dick."

"Well, come down and tell her so. I want you to see how pretty she looks. They're in the drawing-room, having tea—she and Aunt Adelaide and Mr. Gibbs."

"I must first go in and put on a tea gown," said Emily cautiously. "I have designs on Mr. Gibbs, and he's looked at me in this dress for an hour already today. Run down, and I'll follow you. And tell me once more that you know how glad I am for you."

He took her hands in his again, and they stood silent for a moment. Once more the feeling swept over him that, for the first time in his life, a barrier had arisen between him and Emily.

It was not that she did not acquiesce—outwardly, at least. But it was a sense of new difference—a change of standpoint—a widening of a close sympathy. She was not her old self. She was a clever woman, Emily Blair; but on this day she was not her old self. . . .

"What's all this, what's all this?" broke in a gruff voice from the doorway; and Mr. Casimir Driscoll, with his hat in his hand and very red in the face, panted into the room and sank into the nearest chair. "Emily, my dear child, I sent for someone to announce me and to fetch the lift for my old bones, and no one came. Forgive my being unheralded, but I heard the news, and I wanted to be mixed up in the rejoicings. Dick, shake hands. God bless you, my dear boy!"

"This is the scene of the private rejoicings," said Emily, turning on the electric light and beginning to busy herself with the tea-table. "The more general hilarity is going on in the drawing-room. You are my third gentleman for tea today. The underfootman has given notice because I keep too much company."

"That is the trouble with you, my dear. You are general, and not specific."

"Oh, don't call names, my dear Mr. Casimir! 'General' sounds slightly improper, and 'specific' sounds like a patent medicine."

Mr. Driscoll laughed. "Dick here will tell you that you make a vast mistake. Well, Dick, I was against you, you know; but I wish you joy, with all sincerity. We'll try to love your wife as much as we love you."

"I hope you will, all of you. I've just been telling Emily how happy Pinkie and I are. It seems too good to be true. I never thought she'd take me."

"Oh, yes, you did!" retorted Mr. Driscoll calmly. "You were cocksure of yourself. That is one of your most irritating qualities, Dick—your determination. God help your wife!"

Dick laughed. "Well, Emily has volunteered to be the instrument.

I must go down now. Dress up, Emily, and follow me. It's a shame to keep Mr. Casimir all to yourself up here."

"Yes," said Emily mechanically, "I will."

When he had gone she and Mr. Driscoll sat looking at each other in silence. Then she tried to smile—a rather wan, tired smile at best, which faded away very soon and left her with glistening eyes. Once or twice she made an effort to speak, but the words would not come. As for Mr. Casimir, he watched her with a set look in his hard old face; and then he leaned forward and took her hand.

"You need never do that, you know—with me," he said.

She did not answer.

"Of course," pursued Mr. Driscoll, straightening himself again and carefully selecting a piece of toast from the tea-table beside him, "of course, I knew that Amabel's death would be a great shock to you. The whole thing was so tragic—her being thrown only early this afternoon at Tuxedo, and killed instantly. I telephoned Dick, and told him that, of course, you would have heard of it before anyone——"

"Amabel!" broke in Emily.

"Yes; and that you would be sure not to mention it, but to try to keep bright today for his and—and *Pinkie's* sake. Good Lord! That at my time of life I should have to call a woman *Pinkie*—with *Myrtle* as the only possible refuge! Well, as I say, I told Dick over the telephone not to bother you, or expect you to be quite yourself. Amabel was one of your most intimate friends."

"But, Mr. Casimir—" began Emily hoarsely.

"Yes, yes, my dear, I know. Don't explain—it's so unnecessary. I should very much like a cup of tea."

He chatted on in his easy, quiet way, sipping his tea with evident enjoyment, and never once turning his eyes in Emily's direction. By a great effort she had controlled herself, and was beginning to talk with her old vim and fire.

When he rose to go her eyes met his for a moment. She smiled.

"That was good of you, my friend," she said, "but I didn't deserve it. I have no mercy for myself when I—smash up. It isn't like me; and I hate to be inconsistent."

IV

"THERE have been subterranean rumors," whispered Mr. Driscoll to Emily, his keen eyes twinkling, and his champagne glass in his hand, "that W. Harry is going to make a speech!"

The great round dinner-table in the centre of the tapestried room, the gleaming silver and glass, the heavy scent of the bridal roses, and the gaiety and brilliancy of the whole, made a very beautiful sight. It was the eve of the wedding day, and Mrs. Blair had gathered the bridal-party beneath her roof, to celebrate the combination of Dick's good taste and Pinkie's money.

At one side of the table Dick, Pinkie, Mrs. Blair and the ushers and bridesmaids were banked. Emily, supported by Mr. Gibbs on one hand and Mr. Driscoll on the other, busied herself with the old relatives and the dull friends. She looked remarkably handsome, and was talking remarkably brilliantly; and the whole table subsided, every now and then, to listen to her.

The chief hilarity, opposite, proceeded from Larry Wharncliffe, who was noisily and volubly seconded by Mr. W. Harry Gibbs. This was a pale young man, of a general tint of indescribable vagueness only to be defined as sandy. His ears were very large and stuck out rebelliously, and his eyes very watery, and his mouth very weak. He wore appallingly flashing rings, and appallingly large boutonnières. Providence had been absent-minded in creating him; he was a disappointment as a man, but he would have done very well as an ass.

Emily turned to Mr. Driscoll in horror.

"I can bear no more!" she returned.

"He tried to propose to me in the drawing-room before dinner. God is very unjust at times."

"What do you do the days you don't have proposals?" asked Mr. Driscoll, attacking a squab with calm enjoyment. "How banal it must seem! If the truth were told, I wonder how often women make men propose to them just for the sentimental emotion of a refusal!"

"My dear Mr. Driscoll, don't put it as badly as *refusal*! I always say that I long to fill every need in their aching lives, and will willingly go to any decent extent in order to do so—even a tête-à-tête dinner or a midnight drive in the Park. Then the emotional position has been defined—and he ends up a cynical friend or an unsophisticated enemy. I don't refuse. I only regret that I cannot accept."

"You know too much!"

Emily groaned. "Has my carefully prepared assumption of innocence really failed to deceive you? How horrible! For some time I used openly to doubt the faith of your sex, until I found out—by experience, believe me—that the woman who doubts a man will never be believed herself. My one passion is to be believed. I would rather go to the stake than admit where I buy my hair."

"I am at least credulous as to your having understood life, my dear."

"I have not understood life, but people—which is far more important. It has prevented me from talking about my own affairs, and dressing too young. It has made me contradict many truths and leave uncontradicted many inferences. For instance, almost everyone I know thinks I have a past. As a matter of fact, I haven't; but I am far from being fool enough to say so. It has placed me in a romantic position where people don't say that I grow old, but that I look less young, and where I am called an interesting woman instead of an old maid."

Mr. Driscoll laughed. "You are a great bluffer, Emily."

"Thank goodness, yes. I am over thirty, you see."

"And what has that to do with it?"
"Women over thirty," said Emily drily, "either part their hair and wear gray, or bluff."

"What about men?"

"All men are asses until they are thirty. They are fools until they are forty. They are knaves until they are fifty. They are charming until they are—let me see, is it below sixty or seventy that you are? And they are *men*—until they die."

"I have not been subdued by your wily flattery," retorted Mr. Driscoll stoutly. "But if you rail at my sex, why is it that you like me so much?"

Emily thought for a moment. "I like you because you are a clever man," she answered slowly; "and because the clever in you is stronger than the man."

"You can be serious when you want, can't you?"

"Yes. But gravity is—not my style, as my friend Miss Gussie Regan says. There is a great deal in knowing one's role, Mr. Driscoll. I should make a poor sort of gravity, whereas I am an amusing sort of joke. If people would only realize that! I don't know which is worse—funny people who insist on being serious, or serious people who insist on being funny."

"The world has more influence on one's attitude in regard to humor than you think," said Mr. Driscoll. "It has raised me up, on a sliding scale, most beautifully. I started out in grand tragedy, limelights and all. I then rose to comic opera. I am now at vaudeville; and if I live to be seventy, I shall have reached the sublime heights of a continuous performance."

"Speech, speech, speech!" clamored the table suddenly.

"The hour has come when we must die!" remarked Mr. Driscoll imperturbably, leaning back in his chair and looking with infinite regret from his interrupted dinner to the erect form of Harry Gibbs. "Wake me in ten minutes, Emily."

After dinner, in the drawing-room, the noise increased. Larry Wharncliffe donned a hearth-rug, and performed what, he explained, was a take-

off on Parsifal. Emily established Mr. Driscoll and old Gibbs comfortably in a corner, with good cigars and whisky-and-soda within reach. The two men seemed rather to like each other, she saw. "If you will give way to him a little," she had told Mr. Driscoll, "you will find you get along famously." Mr. Driscoll, from all appearances, seemed to have "given way"; to have talked less obviously about the beauties of his club and the advantages of having been born below Fourteenth street; and the two launched into a discussion of mining with much interest.

Dick hung over Pinkie, tried to keep Larry Wharncliffe in order, and looked bored.

"How one hates people at times!" he remarked grimly to Emily as she passed him.

"Thank you, *Monsieur mon cousin*. I am, unfortunately, a person."

"All this fuss and feathers," he went on, looking impatiently at Pinkie, who had flitted away from him. "It's awful rot. No one enjoys it, and Pinkie and I least of all."

"My dear Dick, the efforts I made over the menu were piteous!"

He smiled affectionately at her. "I don't mean that. It's this effect of—of a wild beast show that is so deadly boring."

Emily sobered suddenly. "Does it strike you, too, how like a menagerie it all is? There are only two sensible, sane souls in this room, Dick—Mr. Driscoll and your father-in-law that is to be."

"And you!"

"I?" said Emily carelessly, rising to move on. "Oh, I may be sane some day, but I am quite mad now."

Later in the evening she drifted back to Mr. Driscoll. He was alone, and she seated herself beside him with a sigh of contentment.

"I have, in return for—for *Harry's* speech, a blow for you," she said. "Prepare yourself for the worst: Pinkie is going to sing."

"My dear Emily, the speech finished what resistance was left in me.

You and I are very naughty and cynical tonight, by the way."

Emily did not answer. She was looking fixedly across the room.

"Dick is bored," she remarked finally. "He said just now that this reminded him of a circus."

Mr. Driscoll took a long whiff of his cigar and closed his small eyes meditatively. "I wonder if he *will* wake up!"

"I wonder!" said Emily thoughtfully. "Ah, there goes Pinkie to the piano. Aunt Adelaide is going to accompany her. How sweet she looks!"

"What do you bet she sings?"

Emily pondered for a moment. "'The Rosary' and 'Violets'!"

Mr. Driscoll burst out laughing as Mrs. Blair struck the first chords.

"Go up head!" he said.

The following afternoon, just as dusk was falling, she stood alone in the middle of the great drawing-room at the Gibbs house. There were trampled flowers and torn pieces of white satin ribbon on the floor, a scent of crushed gardenias in the air; and the vivid glare of the electric lights made everything look fagged and played out. The bride and bridegroom had just passed out and down the stairs; and everyone had trooped after them, to shower them with rice from the front door. Only Emily—handsome, cold and looking a little drawn—was left in the centre of the great, empty room.

She had not been able to bear the thought of going downstairs, somehow; to stand in the midst of the laughing, pushing rabble, who were here for an afternoon's diversion, while she—She had carried herself bravely that day, she told herself; had held her head high, and faced the music well. But now, at this last moment of Dick's old life, her courage had ebbed.

She felt miserably alone and deserted, as she stood there. The laughter drifted up to her, louder and louder; there were cries of good-bye, and good wishes—Larry Wharncliffe's voice shouting some joke—a sudden banging of a carriage door—a sound of moving wheels—a great rattle of flying rice,

and a ringing cheer—and then all was still.

Emily pressed her hands suddenly to her head. Passionately she felt that she must do something—she must laugh, or cry, or fall, or—She stepped irresolutely forward to the door. On a table beside her stood a great bowl of rice. Her eyes lit on it, and she laughed aloud, angrily.

Then, suddenly, her finer nature rising impulsively in her, she seized the heavy bowl in both hands, and flung the rice, with all her strength, down the stairs.

V

"THEY'RE giving a play at the Third Avenue called 'Because She Loved,'" remarked Miss Gussie Regan as she rubbed Emily's head vigorously. "Five acts and thirteen scenes. It's elegant."

Emily twisted her rings absently, and looked out of the window. She was not as interested in Gussie as usual. She seemed tired, and her eyes were a little worn.

Gussie's brow wrinkled. She had keen, round, black eyes, which looked life over with gimlet-like sharpness. She was plump and solid—of that exaggerated figure which generally goes, in department stores, by the military name of "straight-front." Her hair, very black and shiny and very elaborately held with combs and bows of black ribbon, descended in a startling manner over her left eye, in what she called a "Della Fox Dip."

"I don't think you're feeling extra well, Miss Blair," began Gussie, after bearing the silence as long as possible. "My, your hair is coming out! I guess you go out too much nights."

"I fancy I do. It is the end of the season, you see; and I have been particularly busy this winter. I have been taking my cousin's wife, young Mrs. Faxon, about with me."

"The blond young lady with the pearl earrings? I read in the papers that she was at the opera with you

and Mrs. Blair. Costumed in Nile-green satin, it said. This has been her second winter married, hasn't it? My, I remember fixing your hair for her wedding as if it was yesterday. 'Gussie,' you says to me, 'Gussie, be very careful.' And I was. I took just as much pains as if it was for your own wedding. I know you brought me some wedding cake in a white satin box, painted just elegant; and I slept with it under my pillow. My sister Etta"—Gussie caught up a brush and began to ply it—"my sister Etta got a three months' reduced subscription to *Sound Society*—and a real nice pearl hatpin, too, for that matter—for guessing a riddle in the back of it; and she read in it last week that Mr. and Mrs. Faxon wasn't getting along very well; and that there was some third person——"

Emily turned sharply. "What?"

"Yes, ma'am. It said that 'the only originality of the affair was its swiftness,' or something like that. Think of it—three months' subscription, reduced, and a hatpin."

"Give me my dressing-gown, please. Would you like to go to the opera on Friday?"

"Like? Miss Blair, I always did say to my sister Etta: 'Etta,' I says, 'there's one person in this city that's a real lady, and that's Miss Emily Blair.' I often tell Etta the things you do. Balls, and music, and reading, and calls—no, there's not many like you. Where are the seats?"

When Gussie had gone with her spoils Emily sat still in front of her dressing-table. Once or twice she reached out her hand to ring for her maid; and then sank irresolutely back, her eyes fixed on her own reflection.

Two years had wrought very small change in her. Among the thick, black waves of her hair there was not yet the sign of a white thread. She was distinctly handsomer. She was going to be at her best at middle age, people said. Yet the change of years was coming, and would come gradually. It was all alike—more or less unchanging. The monotony of the very

rush, the monotony of the very brilliancy, the monotony of her very soul seemed fixed.

When the young Faxons had returned from their honeymoon Emily had gathered her courage and prepared for the battle. It was a difficult one from the first. Pinkie was eager for help only in ways which Emily innately despised. She clung to Emily with a persistency not of affection, but of position. She had made up her mind what she wanted; and she set out, with admirable energy, to accomplish it.

No one could have helped Pinkie more than Emily. In New York she was distinctly individual; and her sway was not the ordinary sway of money and entertainment. She took her cousin's wife about with her, and spoke to the right people at the right time; and the world remarked, at the outset, that Pinkie's career was assured. She was enchantingly pretty, and she was gaining a certain ease and self-possession. At the end of her first season as Mrs. Richard Faxon she had refused an invitation from Mrs. Carstairs, and found it less often necessary to ask Emily to dinner.

The second year had only continued matters. Emily, laughing a little, in spite of herself, saw that her use was over. It seemed indeed the very irony of fate. She had dreamed of inspiring Pinkie with lofty motives; and she was only politely asked for the loan of her visiting-list. Emily's sense of humor carried her through; and every now and then, when Dick wanted some new rugs or needed advice about a present for Pinkie, she held herself ready, and felt repaid, by the touch of the old companionship, for the disappointment of the new.

Dick had taken it all very smilingly, amused at his wife's passion for society, pleased at her success, and was oftener at his club than at any time in his life. He seemed to view his and Pinkie's attitude of careless gaiety as a matter of course. The rather sad consciousness had come to Emily that, even in their drift, they were very happy. Their tastes had merged; or rather, the trend

of their mutual life had been formed by the same exigencies of companionship and surrounding. New York had drawn them in. They had been lost in its uproar. And the worst part was that they seemed to enjoy it.

For the future, Emily had often thought. She had foreseen things more serious, indeed, than the situation seemed to warrant; for instance, that some one of the many youths who hung about Pinkie should resolve his foolishness into seriousness; or that some one of the many women who flattered Dick should appeal to him—in fact, that the general should become the special. The safeguard on Pinkie's side seemed that, apart from Dick, she was hardly yet established enough to stand on her own feet. And, as Emily had realized long before, Pinkie was no fool. The safeguard for Dick was that he was still boyishly, frankly, almost foolishly, in love.

But even so, he was a man who would, some day, need companionship. That Emily saw; so, biding her time, she waited; and now Gussie and her gossip—which was the gossip of generality, but not therefore less dangerous, as Emily knew—worried her.

She sat for some time in front of the mirror, still dreaming. Then she suddenly rose, rang the bell, and ordered her outdoor things.

When Emily, half an hour later, made her way into the Faxons' drawing-room, she found Larry Wharncliffe smoking a cigarette on the hearth-rug.

"Hello!" he exclaimed amicably. "You here? Mrs. Dick's dressing."

"Yes," said Emily, sinking down into a cushioned chair by the fire, "so I hear. I'm going to wait to see her. How are you? I haven't run across you for a long time."

Larry laughed, and pulled down his flowery waistcoat.

"I've been awfully rushed this winter. I see your aunt all the time; and I was in your box Monday night, but you weren't there."

Emily settled herself comfortably in

her chair, and began to twist her little chain of pearls about her fingers.

"I gave up my place to Pinkie on Monday," she said. "I am glad you dropped in and talked to them, for I hear she looked especially pretty."

"She's a deuced pretty woman," remarked Mr. Wharncliffe absently. "Going to dine at the Logans' Monday?"

"No; I have another engagement."

"Or at the Jimmy Whites' tomorrow?"

"I'm not asked."

Larry laughed. "We don't seem to move in the same set, do we?" he said a little tartly.

"Oh, I don't know," Emily answered carelessly. "I have invented a new motto for society folk: 'Comparisons are always odious, but distinctions are always obvious.'"

Larry jerked a chair forward with his foot, and sat down, watching her keenly.

"Say, I want to ask you something. What's the reason you're so down on me?"

She raised her eyes to his in half-surprise. "Why this sudden anxiety?"

"Well, you see, I particularly want—and have wanted—to be friends with you. And I never get so much as a smell of it. You're so confoundedly icy. You've got more than most people to blow about, and yet you're so indifferent. I don't understand you, Miss Emily Blair; but I do want to be friends with you."

Emily was silent for some moments. She had turned her head and was looking fixedly away from him. Finally she spoke.

"I think you mean," she said slowly, "that you want to get something out of me and that you're not quite honest enough to say so frankly. Well, I, on the contrary, am going to be honest. I don't like you, and I have never liked you; and I decline the honor of your friendship."

Larry shrugged his shoulders. There was a tense, set look about his mouth.

"You may regret that some day," he observed lightly.

"Possibly I may."

"You might have been able to help me, not so very far away; and I'm quite certain—I'm *dead sure*, Miss Blair—that I would have been able to help you."

Emily stifled a little yawn. "I am old enough to walk without leading-strings. Now Pinkie——"

He turned sharply. "What?"

She half closed her eyes. There was a hard gleam in them, mingled with a little smile of triumph.

"Pinkie is probably in need of someone to befriend her on her lonely way. Why don't you offer *her* your friendship?"

Larry flicked the ash daintily from his cigarette.

"Oh, don't you worry about Pinkie," he said easily. "She's all right."

Emily twisted suddenly in her chair and faced him.

"Yes," she said deliberately, "she is."

A moment later she had relapsed into her former position.

"I saw a very dashing-looking trap at the door here. Is it yours?"

Larry turned. He was biting his lip beneath his mustache.

"Oh, yes. When we've had some tea, I'm going to take a drive."

"Alone?"

"I don't exactly know. It depends."

"Ah," said Emily lightly—"on me, I suppose. Now that is quite pretty of you. I will go with pleasure."

Their eyes met for a moment. Then Larry gave a little laugh, and tossed his cigarette into the fire.

"Gad!" he ejaculated shortly.

Emily laughed, in her turn, as she rose to greet Pinkie and Richard, who were entering the doorway.

"Exactly, my friend," she returned.

Dick came forward with outstretched hands.

"This *is* nice," he said, drawing his cousin's arm affectionately through his. "We can't be honored too often in this

way. Hello, Larry, glad to see you. I want you to see Pinkie's new tea gown, Emily. Doesn't she look nice?"

Pinkie, who was seating herself at the tea-table, laughed, and patted the shining waves of her golden hair.

"You're too ridiculous, Dick. What do people care what one has on? Don't be silly in public."

"That's always what a woman says," observed Larry, watching her closely. "As long as a man's silly in private, she's rather ashamed of his being silly in public."

"You are growing to be like Emily, Larry," said Richard, smiling. He was leaning over the back of his cousin's chair, and the firelight was playing on his keen, handsome face. One or two light lines were drawn across his forehead, and there was a rather steadier look in his eyes than a few months since. When Emily had chaffed him about the change he had only laughed, and said that marriage was preoccupying.

"Don't put me down for clever," retorted Larry hastily. "Miss Blair wouldn't be so deuced clever if she weren't so deuced attractive. A woman who is clever without being attractive is as bad as a baked apple without cream."

Everyone laughed. Then Emily turned to him. "From whom did you filch that?" she asked, still smiling.

"Oh, of course I know I'm a fool. But I did think that remark was rather bright, Miss Blair."

"It is therefore sufficiently palpable that it was not yours. But please forgive me, as I am to have the pleasure of driving with you."

"*You!*" said Pinkie suddenly.

"Yes. Mr. Wharncliffe placed himself and his steeds at my disposal. As I am on my way far uptown, it is a great convenience. And as he is growing so clever and epigrammatic, it is likewise a great pleasure."

"I once heard you say that epigrams were cleverness of the second class, though," observed Dick, sipping his tea and watching his cousin amusedly.

"There are three distinct phases of

budding cleverness, before the epigrammatic stage is reached, my dear Dick. The first is reading trite stories by professional after-dinner speakers, and getting them off as original. The second is going to Europe, and returning with a French accent. The third is writing a book, and, when it fails, saying that the public is not educated up to it—and meaning that the public is not educated up to the author. When one has committed one or all of these sins one drinks oneself drunk with epigrams. And then—one realizes that one is a fool; which last is the only clever stage of all."

"Why did you never write a book?" asked Pinkie.

"I am not good enough to individualize," said Emily cautiously. "I pass only as a generality. The tabulated commandments of my life are few. But the first is that one must not try to be a star when one is only a drawing-room lamp."

"What are some of your other commandments?"

"Well, the second is always to tell the truth, and never to tell truths."

"Hear, hear!" laughed Dick. "I subscribe to that. I think the curse of dogma is unkind honesty about other people's faults."

"Yes," said Emily. "I quite agree. I don't believe much in orthodoxy, myself. I don't mean Christian orthodoxy, but any orthodoxy. If I were educating a child, I should not bring it up an Episcopalian or a Catholic, but neither should I bring it up a Brown-ingite or a Buddhist. I once knew a woman, by the way, who brought up her children like Greeks; and one day they were found in the backyard, sacrificing a mutton chop to Jove because the cook had left."

"You must have a queer idea of religion, Miss Blair," remarked Larry.

"I think that religion may be said to be like shoes—suitable and necessary for every age, high or low, as one's taste directs, and growing larger as one grows older," said Emily thoughtfully.

"Some people," put in Dick, "like

their shoes excessively broad. Others wear them excessively narrow."

"Yes. And though the narrow ones are generally the prettier to look at, the broad ones are certainly the more comfortable."

"Go on with your commandments," said Pinkie. She was moving the tea-cups about rather nervously.

Emily rose.

"My biggest law," she said slowly, "is an absolute directness of thought and word and action. I don't want churches and I don't want priests; I don't want stained glass, and I don't want incense; but I do want honesty. Come, Mr. Wharncliffe. If you want to drive in the pitch-dark, you may; but I don't want to break my neck, and I won't."

"I'm going to get you to keep an eye on my wife this week," said Dick, drawing Emily's furs absently through his fingers. "I'm going away—going to run down to Hempstead to see about my horses. I shall put up at the Graveses'. I'm off tomorrow."

Emily turned. "Would you like me to come and stay with you, Pinkie?" she said.

Pinkie flushed a little. "I—it really doesn't seem worth while. I should be out all day, and every evening, and so would you."

There was a moment's pause.

"You can always telephone me, if you want me," Emily went on. "And I can always come at the shortest notice. Good-bye, Dick. Good luck."

Dick stood, leaning against the mantelpiece, staring absently into the fire. He was wondering, vaguely, why he had felt such a sense of desertion as the door closed behind Emily. She was such a dependable person—so strong, so quick and so true. In a moment he gave a little sigh, and looked over at his wife.

"What a trump Emily is!" he said.

Pinkie sipped her tea thoughtfully.

"Yes."

"I don't believe a finer woman ever lived. She is always the same, and yet always surprising one by a new strength

or a new breadth. No, I don't believe a finer woman ever lived."

"She is awfully popular," said Pinkie, with a little yawn. "Did you bring me that cheque, dear?"

Dick looked at her, silently, for a moment. Then he walked over to her chair and sat on its arm, laying one hand gently on her shoulder.

"Listen, little girl," he said. "I want you to go a bit slower with things. We've been magnificently extravagant lately; and my income isn't quite endless."

"Have you lost money on the stock market?" said Pinkie absently. She was playing with the lace on her tea gown, and was obviously bored.

"No. But I have something rather serious on my mind; and while I don't intend that it shall affect you more than is absolutely necessary, I want you to help me by keeping down the general expenses."

He raised his hand, and drew his fingers lightly through her hair.

"About a week ago I had a most unexpected surprise, Pinkie. The heirs of one of the beneficiaries of my father's will suddenly turned up from the West, with a claim against the Faxon estate. It appears that father had had dealings with their father—who was an old friend of his—and that through some shortsightedness on father's part these people have lost a large sum of money. Father was always anxious about the deal, and warned us that his judgment in the matter had been poor, and that he felt responsible for it. Things have turned out rather worse than he ever expected. The whole thing is very long and very complicated, and I can't explain it to you. But the fact remains that some restitution has got to be made to the heirs on their side, by the heirs on our side. I have consulted my lawyer and I have consulted Mr. Driscoll; and they both agree with me that some of the money must be refunded."

"Is it a large sum?"

Dick hesitated.

"Yes, it is a large sum."

"Well, why don't you go to law

about it? I think it's nonsense. These people may be swindling you."

"It is not a question of law, little girl. It is a question of honor."

"And I suppose I shall have to do without a second-man?"

Dick burst out laughing. "Don't look so tragic, darling. What are second-men, after all? Aren't you glad to give me a lift in this way?"

Pinkie rose suddenly. She was very pale, and there was a sharp look in her light eyes.

"It's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard of. Here I am to economize—I am to deny myself—all because you have got some quixotic idea of honor, with a capital H, into your head. It's perfect trash. Why don't you sell a few of your horses?"

Dick had risen also. He looked down at her with a tenderness such as one feels for a testy child; but there was a stern set about the corners of his mouth.

"I am going to Hempstead to arrange it," he said quietly.

There was silence for a moment. Then Dick spoke again.

"It sometimes hurts me, Pinkie," he went on in a low voice, "when you take so little interest in my life and in my affairs. I realized a short time ago that I was very lonely. I think we shall find that we lead a poor sort of existence if we are not together more. New York is a very dangerous place. I know it better than you, and I want you to be—very careful. I want you to be with me more; to give me more of your time, and to have fewer poor specimens of manhood hanging about you."

She cowered back suddenly, twisting her face away from him.

"Do you hear?" said Dick slowly.

The stillness in the room was almost unbearable.

In a moment Dick turned and walked over to the door. He paused with his hand on the knob.

"Please remember that that is my wish," he said, "and that I expect it to be carried out."

VI

Dick went down to Hempstead the next morning; and on Friday, which fell two days after, Emily ran down to the Graveses' for the week-end.

There was a large house-party; and Dick, riding over to his own stables at Roslyn every day, was with the others but little. He looked preoccupied and grave; and his host, seeing this, forebore to bother him, and let him make his own plans and have his own way. But when Emily arrived he set out later, and reached home again earlier. For the first time since his marriage he seemed dull and listless; and he felt it a comfort to talk to Emily in the old way, and to rest himself in the knowledge that she always understood.

The Sunday morning was clear and cold, with glorious sunshine on the snow. After breakfast the party packed themselves up in sleighs, and set out for a neighboring country house where a bridge tournament was in progress. Emily pleaded a headache, and begged to be allowed to spend the morning indoors. She averred that she did not know the Graveses' neighbors, and that she hated bridge; and, rather reluctantly—for house-parties were one of her great talents—they left her far behind.

When they had all gone she drew an armchair to the fire in the large, sunny living-room, and settled herself comfortably. There was a certain peace in feeling that she had the great, roomy house to herself. Through the windows she could see the smooth, glistening stretches of snow, and catch a glimpse of the frosted trees. A Sunday morning quiet pervaded everything. There was only the sound of a big clock ticking somewhere, the drip of the melting icicles on the piazza without, and the drowsy hum of the wood fire.

She propped her chin on her hands and sat gazing into the flames, seeing pictures in them—after the fashion of all people who have not what they want—and fancying strange fancies, and she had to journey back a far dis-

tance when someone suddenly touched her on the shoulder.

She turned, and saw a tall figure in riding clothes behind her, smiling down at her.

"Why, Dick," she said, "I thought you'd gone!"

Dick laughed. "You look so uncommonly pleased to see me that I almost wish I had. Make room, there's a good soul, and let me get warm. I'm half frozen."

Emily drew her chair aside and poked the fire.

"There!" she said. "Sit down and warm yourself. Yes, you *are* cold—I can see you are. Why this sudden re-appearance?"

He held out his hands to the blaze. "Why, I'd ridden hardly a mile when my pony went lame. I came back to get another horse, but there was none in the stables that could be spared, so——"

Emily shook her head. "Oh, Richard, Richard, why are you so loved of ladies? Why have you always a lack of compliments and an excess of truth? How pretty it would have been of you to say that you came back because you had something on your mind, and you wanted to talk it over with your useless cousin."

"You know too much! Joking aside, though——"

"I do know too much. You are quite right. The one thing I superlatively desire is to be an innocent fool. But, my dear boy, I know you're worried."

Dick's forehead wrinkled and he bit his lip. He spread out his hands suddenly, with a peculiarly helpless little gesture.

"What am I to do?" he said. "Things don't seem to be going right with me—I know that. And I suppose I'm chiefly to blame."

"Yes," said Emily in her brisk, practical way, "I suppose you are. Now, listen, Dick. I'm going to talk frankly to you. You're a very exacting man."

"Oh, I know it. I know I'm trying and difficult in many ways. It isn't

in my home life that I mean, Emily—I know exactly what I want there, and I mean to have it. It's my own life, my own uselessness, my own failure. It's not the home life at all, I tell you."

"Are the two separable?" said Emily quietly.

"Why, they've got to be!"

"You wouldn't have said that two years ago, Dick."

"No," said Dick, half laughing, "I suppose not."

"Well, again I know too much. Believe me, my dear cousin, the one means the other, always and invariably; that is, in the larger sense. A man may, of course, go to his home no more than to his club; but not a man of your kind, Dick. You depend on your home, you're proud of it, and you've got to undo the tangle there before you can start fresh elsewhere."

She laid her hand for the briefest instant on his arm.

"Now, of course, you cannot discuss your wife with anyone on earth, Dick—not even with Mr. Casimir, not even with me. But what you *can* do is to discuss the general situation. I can see things are a little ruffled."

Dick laughed. "Call it ruffled, if you want. I—I don't feel that I'm making her happy; that's the long and the short of it."

Emily shaded her eyes from the sunlight which was pouring in upon them.

"Are you still very much in love with Pinkie?" she asked.

"Why—Emily!" He turned suddenly upon her.

"Yes, yes—I see, I know. Of course you are. I only wanted to hear it from you yourself. Well, then, given love, the matter is easy enough. You're both out of temper, out of sorts—ruffled, as I said. It'll soon blow over. The future is the point, Dick."

He nodded thoughtfully.

Emily examined her rings critically. "Why don't you go off somewhere for a little trip? Let Pinkie go South or abroad with some wise and old person, and you take a jaunt in another direction. You will both be anxious to return; and you'll find out that your

mountain was the silliest molehill imaginable."

"No," said Dick slowly. "I don't want Pinkie to leave me just now."

"You think you'd better fight it out together? Well, I don't know that I agree with you. Absence—et cetera, et cetera, you know. It isn't that either one of you isn't fond, Dick. It's simply that you're both cross and tired and bored."

They were silent for some moments.

"You're an awfully good sort, Emily," said Dick at last, rousing himself. "You're like a tonic for general debility."

"How discouraging! Why am I always considered a sort of medicinal, negative creature? I would so much rather have been an intoxicator than a cure."

"Champagne, for instance."

"Yes. But then, as I told you all the other day, I have tried not to kick at the part I was cast for. One must realize that one can never be better than what one is. Have you ever read 'Peer Gynt,' Dick, by the way? Ah, no—A dog is very nice as a dog, and a cat is very nice as a cat; but a doggy cat or a catty dog are freaks of nature."

"I wonder if what you call positive people are happier than negative ones," said Dick.

"I think they are always happier. Life comes to positive people at first hand, and to negative people at second hand. It has been so all through the ages. You are a positive person; that is, you are combative. I am negative; that is, subservient. You do; I shall always be done to. If we had lived in heroic times, you would have gone out and slaughtered lions, while I would have stayed at home and cooked your dinner. My kind is quite as necessary and far more practical than yours. But it isn't nearly as much fun."

"Do you remember, years ago, when I once came home from school for the summer holidays, how we were playing robbers by the Grasslands brook one day; and I said, 'Come along, Emily, let's go out and kill people!' and you

said, 'Oh, Dick, it's so much more fun to be killed!'

"There, you see!" said Emily. "I had the instinct then. The same innate sense which has stopped my wearing red has refused to let me be positive. Neither suits me—either would make me look like a fool. Oh, Dick, do you remember that Grasslands brook?"

"Every inch of it. Do you remember the day you tumbled into it, and I hauled you out of about six inches of water? Good heavens, what a hero I felt!"

"And the ginger-snap tin that we sank somewhere on the far bank, to keep our treasures in!"

"Yes, I remember we were saving our money. I wanted a camera, and you—what *did* you want? But I know when we'd saved for two months we had just eleven cents; and I gave it all to you."

"And I generously bought you caramels with it."

"And you ate the caramels," said Dick, laughing. "What good times we had! Oh, Emily, how I adored you!"

"Oh, Dick, how I adored *you*! You were such a nice little boy. You were really charming."

"I wonder if there is any bond quite like that of having played together as children," observed Dick thoughtfully as he poked the fire. "Somehow, we forget apart; but we remember together. Have you ever noticed that?"

"Yes," said Emily. "I've noticed it with us two. Every now and then we journey back, hand in hand, to our old games and our old romps. It's the nicest journey I've ever taken. Do you know, I sometimes believe that when we die we suddenly grow small again and have our fun and our toys, our old romps and our old companions—even our birthday parties and our Christmas trees, our cakes and our candles—and become children once more."

"We could never travel back except together, Emily."

"No; that is one journey which only I can take with you."

Dick stared into the fire. "I like your idea about death," he said. "It would be glorious to be a nice, simple little chap again."

"I don't know why we ever look on death sadly, except as it leaves us more alone in life. After all, it is the solution we have all been groping after. It is the great explanation. And yet we cry and moan, and beg to be allowed to stay a little longer. We don't seem to realize that death is the most interesting thing in life, and that it's going to clear up all our accounts and balance them. It's such a good, big, clean thing, death; and it's so far wiser and kinder than life."

"Yes. In life, after all, we can only make our own mistakes or our own successes. But there is a strength in death which leaves us all weak little children——"

"And sends us to another school when we have finished with this one," said Emily.

Dick turned to her. "Why are you such an optimistic person, I wonder? I was asking Mr. Casimir only the other day."

Emily smiled. "What was his answer?"

"He said you were optimistic because you had thrashed out pessimism."

"And did you agree with him?"

"No," said Dick, "I didn't. I think you are an optimist because you have seen that it doesn't matter when life fails one, but only when one fails oneself."

"You are a wise man, Richard; and you are right. The thing which makes one a pessimist is when people and things and life—all fail one. The thing which makes one an optimist is to fail oneself. I have done that. I have seen that my mistakes were all due to Emily Blair—to the mismanagement of my own petty little soul. I have despised myself. One only despises when one has a standard. Therefore!"

They were thoughtful for a long time, watching the fire blaze and die down, with the hot glory of the noon sun-

shine upon them. At last Emily pushed back her chair and rose.

"Well, we've had a good talk—the best we've had in years, I think. I must go and prink for luncheon."

Dick rose in his turn. Emily suddenly noticed how tired his eyes were.

"There's one thing—to go back to me and my mix-up," he said, "that you've forgotten to count. You've counted a great many theories, and you've counted me; but you haven't counted Pinkie."

Emily winced. "That was one of the reasons I suggested your going away for a little."

"Pinkie?"

"Yes. I think it would do her more good than you."

"No," said Dick again; "I don't want to leave Pinkie just now."

"Well, of course, it is for you to judge. Take her away with you, then."

Dick shook his head. "Too many dinners coming on."

Emily came a step nearer him. "Would you trust me to take her abroad, Dick?"

The cloud on his face broke. He laid his hands impulsively on her shoulders.

"Dear old Emily," he said, "what a trump you are! I couldn't let her go—no. But what a trump you are!"

That same Sunday afternoon Dick had a telegram from his lawyer summoning him instantly to town.

He caught Emily in the hall as she was leaving the dining-room after luncheon.

"You see, I must go at once," he said. "It is evidently some important turn of affairs. Good-bye, lady cousin, and thanks for your lecture."

Emily shook hands in silence. Then she turned away and began to talk to someone standing beside her.

Just as Dick was leaving the house, however, for his drive to the station, she ran out on the piazza after him.

"Dick!" she called. "Have you your fur coat? It's bitter cold!"

He waved to her and called some-

thing back over his shoulder; and Emily, in her thin house dress, stood on the steps and watched him until he was out of sight.

There are few things more trying than a Sunday afternoon journey in a local train. Dick's particular one was no exception. It made endless stops, interminable halts and delays, and finally exhausted all patience by breaking down and standing motionless for half an hour.

Dick leaned back in his seat and looked out on the dreary winter landscape, where the dusk was already thickening, trying to shut out the crowded car, the closeness, the glare of the flickering light and the chorus of crying babies and candy-sellers. The country without was uniformly flat, and seemed strangely forsaken. A smooth, white pall was drawn over the world, hiding its scars and imperfections, blotting out inequalities and wrapping the great stretches of meadow-land in a vast silence. The shrieking, puffing, clamorous little train looked a ridiculous impertinence. Dick heartily longed to be on a horse, out in the gathering night.

He thought long over his morning talk with Emily, and of its possible consequence. He was just then in the peculiar position of a man who has been living, serenely and securely, in a room papered in green, and who suddenly, one day, discovers that his own eyes and his own common sense have played him false, and that the room has all this time been papered in blue. The knowledge that Pinkie's character and will, in themselves, were probable—indeed, likely—to go consistently against his own in the future had just come to him. It was a heavy blow. He had imagined her, so unfailingly, to be a kitten that it was a vast change to find her a full-fledged cat, with claws and a keen ability to spit. He knew that he was immensely in love—that he had never for the briefest instant doubted. But he had discovered that he had new things to cope with—that Pinkie was cross and discontented, and that she meant to have her own way.

There are a few men in the world who can love a woman and who can still, in plain terms, have character enough to boss her. Richard Faxon was one of these. He was very much in love with his wife; but he was clearly alive to the fact that, as such, she owed him a certain obedience. If he had fully made up his mind to make her happy, he had also—and equally fully—made up his mind to be proud of her. As Emily had said, he was an exacting man. He knew that even in his world, where tradition and refinement were slight prerogatives, his wife, as his wife, would have to meet the exigencies of an old position. He was bound that she should do herself credit, and that she should do his name credit, too.

In all this it will be seen that Richard Faxon was distinctly old-fashioned. Emily and Mr. Casimir, indeed, had always felt that, if Dick had not had his money and his horses, had not danced well and dressed well, he would have been vulgar enough to be conspicuous in some way or other. It was his surroundings which had—for the time being, at least—swamped him. But he was not lost; on the contrary, Dick, with his prejudices and his obstinacies, his ideals and his refinements, was there, more than ever, only waiting for the touch of Necessity to make him a full-fledged man.

The train suddenly gave a jolt and started. The mishap had been repaired. Dick breathed a sigh of relief and turned to the car again.

Some of the passengers had whiled away the delay by getting out and walking up and down in the snow. They came hurrying back now, jostling one another and laughing, fresh and cold from the night wind. One of the broken-down cars had been unhitched and left behind on a siding, and its passengers all came crowding in, too, to take refuge in Dick's car.

Above the din of voices, as he moved his bags and prepared for some uncomfortable person to share his seat, Dick suddenly thought he recognized a familiar tone. He rose and turned,

looking back on the line of people who were pushing their way down the car. What was his utter amazement to see, standing so close to him that his sleeve almost brushed her coat, his wife!

"Pinkie!" he exclaimed. "Pinkie! From where did you drop?"

She had clutched at the back of his seat, almost as if she were dizzy; and she stood there unsteadily, her face pale and her eyes very wide open.

"I—why, I was all alone for Sunday—and I ran down to take luncheon with the Jimmy Whites at East Williston. How funny we should meet!"

"Yes," said Dick, settling her comfortably in the seat beside him. "Carter telegraphed me to dine with him at the club this evening and talk over some business. So I drove over, and caught this train by the skin of my teeth. Are you warm, dear?"

"Of course I'm warm—this car is dreadfully close. I didn't expect you until tomorrow or Tuesday, Dick."

"And I didn't expect to come. But Carter's wire was urgent; and I can finish about the horses by telephone."

"How funny we should meet!" said Pinkie again. She was half turning in her seat, looking back down the car.

"I'm very glad, nevertheless. Tell me, did you have a good time on Saturday night? Did you miss me?"

"Yes. Yes, of course I missed you. Dick—I—Mr. Wharncliffe was lunching at the Whites', too, and he's on this train. He said he'd follow me when we got out to change cars. I'm afraid he——"

"Here he comes now!" said Dick, waving his hand. "Hello, Larry! I packed off from the Graveses' unexpectedly, and who should I run into but my wife. How are you? Sit down there."

Larry Wharncliffe stopped short. He seemed to waver for a moment. Then he glanced quickly at Pinkie and came forward.

"How are you, old boy, how are you? Yes, I was taking care of Mrs. Faxon into town. I persuaded her to bubble down to Mineola with me and have

luncheon, and I thought we'd better come back in the train."

Dick flushed a little. He turned his eyes on his wife.

"So you weren't at East Williston, with the Jimmy Whites?" he said coolly.

"East Williston?" returned Larry, turning over the seat in front, and settling himself so that he faced Richard and Pinkie. "Not we! What should we be doing at East Williston? How are your horses, Dick? Devilish weather, isn't it?"

Dick looked from one to the other for a moment. Then, by a great effort, he began to talk.

When they reached Long Island City Larry left them. He was going home another way than theirs, he said.

A fine sleet was falling as they went on the boat to cross the ferry to New York. But Pinkie resolutely made her way out to the open deck, saying that her head ached and that she wanted the fresh air.

Dick stood beside her as the boat plowed its way across the river, looking down at her and trying to shelter her from the wind. They were alone, all the other passengers having sought the warmth of the cabin.

"Pinkie," he said suddenly, "I've got to ask you! Why did you lie to me?"

She shrank back against the rail; she seemed to gather her strength for a moment. Then she turned and looked down the river at the blurred lights.

"I didn't lie!" she said at last. "You misunderstood——"

Dick shook his head.

"When you are older," he answered gravely, "you will learn to lie better. I wish I could trust you, Pinkie; but I don't."

"You don't understand, Dick," she said again. "It was a misunderstanding——"

Dick was silent. Then he laid his hands on her shoulders and twisted her around so that she faced him. He looked at her for a long time, saying nothing. Her cheeks were pink with the cold, her fair hair, under her pretty little fur hat, was curling and blowing

distractingly in the wind. Finally she raised her eyes and met his look; and, held by something more solemn than the moment, they stood so for what seemed a lifetime in silence.

VII

"It don't seem to me that things are right!" said Gibbs emphatically.

He was sitting at a small tea-table at a fashionable restaurant, staring mournfully at the Dresden tea-cup before him. It was an afternoon some two weeks after Richard Faxon had returned from Hempstead, having sold, almost entirely, the contents of his famous stables. Spring—but a raw, ungenuine spring—was in the air. People's clothes, as they came and went through the brilliant, gilded rooms, seemed either too hot for winter or too chilly for summer. It was that nameless season when one wears straw hats, if one has them left over from the year before, or fur coats, if the latter have been becoming.

Opposite the old gentleman was Emily Blair. Someone had once said of her that she never showed the stamp of her training and her life more than in surroundings like these. She leaned back in her chair, half idle, half observant, bowing every now and then to someone that passed, her delicate eyebrows raised a little, as if she were bored, yet as if she recognized that escape from this sort of thing was impossible. Walking, a half-hour earlier, she had met Gibbs, and they had mutually agreed that they wanted a cup of tea.

Emily raised one thin, nervous hand, and drew some intricate pattern on the tablecloth before she replied.

"In what way—are you anxious?" she said finally.

"Well, in every way. This is a place with a long tongue, this. Pinkie's head seems to have been sort of turned. She's warped. Dick's got a disagreeable set to his mouth, and he's anxious about money. As to whose fault it is——"

"What is the use of discussing the fault, Mr. Gibbs? They have both probably made serious mistakes."

Gibbs half shut his eyes and looked at her keenly.

"You're confoundedly smart, Miss Blair," he said, smiling grimly, "but you're not too smart for me. You wouldn't cut me off that way unless you thought it was Pinkie's fault."

She shrugged her shoulders. "Very well, then. I do think it is Pinkie's fault. But understand, please, that I think it her fault less in what she has done and more in what she has left undone. Suffice to say that they have both been foolish. Let me give you some more tea."

Gibbs sighed as he pushed his cup forward.

"It's rather like living on a volcano."
"Rather."

"Are you scared, Miss Blair?"

"Yes," said Emily slowly; "frankly, I am scared."

They sat on for some time, absently watching the throng about them. The glare of the electric lights grew harder, the noise grew more deafening. Then the people began to go. Little by little the tables were emptied; the orchestra stopped playing, and the waiters looked drearily expectant. The afternoon was over.

"Well," said Emily, rising, with a sigh, "the circus is finished. I shall walk home and get my lungs full of fresh air. We've had a nice time, haven't we?"

He smiled down at her as he took her hand in his.

"Sure!" he said emphatically. "We'll do it again."

"And I'm sorry I can't dine with you. Ask me some other time."

"Yes," said Gibbs, "I will." They had made their way to the door and were standing on the steps, looking out into the crowded streets. "Do you see that automobile? Well, it's mine. Usually, when it isn't broken, Harry's using it. I'd like to take you home in it."

Emily shook her head, and gathered her dress into one hand. "No, you

had best leave me to my crabbed self. Let me walk home. I am really out of sorts, Mr. Gibbs; and you are too sharp a person to be with when one has not all one's armor on. Good night."

"I wish you were simpler," said Gibbs slowly, screwing up his keen eyes critically. "If you'll excuse my saying so, you're too damned smart. You're a very fine woman, Miss Blair, who dresses up in satin when you'd look a sight better in calico."

Emily laughed as she started down the steps.

"And every now and then people like you are wise enough to see that the satin is cotton-backed," she called over her shoulder. "Good night again."

The early evening was very beautiful, and Emily walked by roundabout ways and as slowly as possible. There was a great sense of relief and peace in her as she finally rang her own door-bell. She called her times of isolation "catching up with her soul." She had got so into the habit of flippancy that she was flippant even in dealing with herself, she averred.

The butler's face, at the door, somehow drew her attention.

"I am glad you've come, miss," he said. "Mr. Faxon has been waiting for you for over an hour. He's in the drawing-room. He wouldn't have any lights, miss."

Emily caught her breath sharply.

"Ah, yes," she said. "I rather expected him. I was detained. Keep back dinner, Lane." And she walked swiftly across the hall and up the stairs to the drawing-room door.

The room was in almost total darkness, and Emily had to feel her way for a moment. Then the fire that was burning at the farther end suddenly flared, and she saw Dick. He was sitting in a deep armchair, drawn up to the hearth, his face buried in his hands; and Emily heard that he was crying, as a man cries but once in his whole life.

In a second she had crossed the room. She flung herself on her knees beside him, and caught at his arm.

"Dick—Dick," she said, "what is

it? Stop crying like that, for God's sake. Speak to me—Dick——”

He raised his head and looked at her. She drew back in horror at the sight of his face.

“I'm glad you have come to me,” he said. There was something in his voice that made her dizzy and sick, strong woman that she was. “I need you, Emily. Pinkie has run away from me with Larry Wharncliffe.”

Emily grew deathly pale, and clutched at the chair to save herself from falling.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that. She has run away with Larry Wharncliffe.”

There was not a sound in the room. The fire shot out, every now and then, and lightened the two figures—the man bent and crouching, the woman on her knees beside him. Emily rested her forehead against his arm. Her heart seemed to be beating in her throat, and her hands were cold and shaking. One thought only was surging through her brain: that, in the supreme moment of his life, he had come to her. She had waited all these years—fighting, hoping, craving—and now he had come.

Dick suddenly rose. All trace of tears had left him. His every muscle was tense and drawn, and there was the look about his mouth that comes only to those who have gone to the end of the world and looked over the wall.

“Get up!” he said. “We have got to do something.”

Emily dropped her eyes from his face. As he spoke life seemed to come back to her. She stood up and faced him. She was once more the quick, capable woman.

“Tell me,” she said shortly.

“I got home this afternoon, and found she had been out since early morning. She had left no message. I never thought of going to her room. When I had waited half an hour I grew anxious and rang for her maid. She—she had paid the woman to lie to me and put me off the track, Emily. Something made me more and more suspicious, and I went upstairs and found

two letters on her dressing-table. I believe”—he laughed suddenly, and Emily winced at the sound—“I believe that letters *are* always left on pincushions in such cases, aren't they? Well, one was addressed to me, and simply said: ‘I am going to Larry forever. I will never come back to you. I have explained everything to Emily. Good-bye.’ The other—is for you.”

He held out an envelope to her. It was of thick white paper, heavily scented, and stamped with the Faxon crest. A sense of utter loathing rushed over Emily. When she spoke her voice was as hard and tense as Dick's.

“Bring me a light!” she said. “One of the candles on the desk will do. There! Shall—do you want me to read it aloud, Dick?”

“Yes.”

Her hands were cool and steady as she turned the pages. She was a strong woman, Emily Blair. The note ran:

“DEAR EMILY:

“I am sure you will be dreadfully surprised at what I am doing. It has all been very terrible for me, and I haven't time to explain things now. The servants don't know anything. Dick will understand from my letter to him that I have gone to Larry, and forever. We shall be here in New York for the present. I know you will try to hurry him about the divorce. We want to be married in time to be at Newport for the summer. My former marriage was very blind and foolish. I am convinced that this is the best way out of it. Dick's mother's pearls are in my top drawer.

“PINKIE.

“P. S.—Please have my clothes and things sent to Larry's apartment.”

Dick breathed heavily for a moment. He snatched the letter from Emily and flung it into the fire.

“I swear to God,” he said solemnly, “that she shall never marry Larry Wharncliffe.”

Then he reeled suddenly and fell to the floor.

Emily, with her own small strength, got him to the sofa. A second later she rang the bell.

“Fetch me some whisky,” she told the butler. “Mr. Faxon has fainted. And then telephone to the Union Club, Lane, and ask Mr. Driscoll to come

here immediately. Tell him Mr. Faxon has had bad news about money matters, and that he must drop everything and come without a moment's delay."

Dick recovered his senses slowly. When he came to Mr. Driscoll and Emily were bending over him. He put his hand unsteadily to his head.

"Let me get up, Emily. I'm glad you're here, Mr. Driscoll. I suppose you know?"

Mr. Casimir was still out of breath from a wild drive from his club. He panted sympathetically as he answered.

"Yes, my dear boy—I know—God help you! Emily has just told me. Keep hold of yourself, Dick. Take just a drop more. There—that's it!"

Dick rose to his feet. "You are both of you very good, but I am quite myself now. Yes, I'm glad you know. The thing has got to come out. It'll be in all the papers in the morning."

"But, my dear Dick, stop a moment! Something must be done—some effort must be made——"

Dick squared his shoulders.

"I wish you to clearly understand this, Mr. Driscoll," he said, "I will not get a divorce."

Mr. Casimir stopped panting.

"Good God, Dick, you don't know what you're saying!"

"Yes, I do. I will not get a divorce. Is that clear?"

"But Pinkie——"

"Pinkie has ruined her life. She has deliberately chosen her path. I am not the one to give her a chance to raise herself."

There was a strange calm about him, a quiet, merciless, measured judgment. Mr. Driscoll looked helplessly at Emily.

"But if Pinkie has chosen to ruin herself," pursued Dick slowly, "I have no intention that she shall ruin me. She can go where she belongs, and stay there. I will not be treated as the majority of husbands in these cases are treated. My home and my name were hers; she disgraced them. I will not do anything to drag her farther down than she has dragged herself; but

neither will I lift my little finger to save her."

"But a divorce——" interrupted Mr. Driscoll.

"It isn't a question of divorce, Mr. Driscoll. I don't care what any law does to her or for her. It is a question of my own manhood. I will not be—lived on—for two years, and then thrown aside for——"

Emily laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Have you no mercy?" she said in a low voice.

He faced around and met her eyes.

"Had she any for me? No. There is nothing more to say about it."

He drew a deep breath and turned toward the door.

"I am going home. I am going to let people know how and as they may. I never want her spoken of—I never want her mentioned to me. Don't, Mr. Driscoll—it is kinder to let me go. I shall leave this country tomorrow. When I was waiting for Emily I telephoned and engaged a passage in a White Star steamer. And now—I am going home."

Emily stepped suddenly in front of him.

"Dick, Pinkie has got to be saved."

Dick gave an ugly laugh. "And who will save her?"

"I will," said Emily quietly.

There was absolute silence for a moment. Then Mr. Driscoll grunted.

"You cannot prevent Emily's trying, my dear boy. Let us sit down quietly for a moment, and hear what she has to suggest."

Dick shrugged his shoulders. "Well?" he said.

Emily's head was erect and her eyes were bright. A spirit of the battlefield was upon her. She would have made a good soldier.

She crossed the room and rang the bell. The butler appeared.

"Lane," she said, "I want you to telephone to the White Star office, to the night-clerk, and say that the state-room reserved this afternoon is for Mrs. Faxon and her maid, not for Mr. Faxon. Mr. Faxon is afraid they may make out the ticket wrong, as he gave

the name so hurriedly. When you have done that, tell Andrews to get the room next mine ready for Mrs. Faxon at once. She is coming here to spend tonight. She will go on board the steamer from here, in the morning, so have an early breakfast. If any reporters should call say that Mrs. Faxon has been summoned suddenly to the bedside of an ill relative in Europe. And now, Lane, call me a cab."

The door closed behind the man. Emily went to the table. She caught up her hat, pinned it on, and tossed her furs about her. Then she moved toward the door.

They stared at her for a moment, speechless. Finally Mr. Driscoll managed to get his voice.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

She paused, with her hand on the knob.

"I am going to Larry Wharncliffe's, to get Pinkie," she said.

Hour after hour dragged on as they waited for her. They spoke very little. Only once did Dick break out.

"Someone ought to have gone with her," he said restlessly.

Mr. Driscoll laid his hand on Dick's arm. "No, no, my dear boy. She was right. She can do more alone. It is the only way to appeal to—Pinkie. Just you let Emily manage this."

Eleven o'clock had just struck when the front door-bell rang. There was a sound of voices in the hall, and of stifled sobbing. The two men glanced at each other, and Mr. Driscoll laughed. He had not laughed that way since he had been at Gettysburg as a young man.

"By God, she did it!" he ejaculated.

A moment later Emily entered the room. She was very pale, but as quiet and collected as ever.

"Pinkie is upstairs," she said quickly. "I had an awful struggle, but I finally managed to do it. She will agree to anything I say now. For the present, she seems to be beaten. She doesn't know you're here, Dick, so be very quiet. She is going abroad tomorrow. I told them you would

never get a divorce—and they both funk'd. She says she will never see you again. She agrees to our telling the world that you have simply separated. At least all the scandal has been saved. Go home with Mr. Driscoll for tonight, Dick. We will talk things over again in the morning."

Dick caught her hands in his.

"I only wish," he said sadly, "that she had been worth what you've done for her."

Then he hurried to the door.

"I will meet you downstairs, Mr. Driscoll. I am going to telephone home for some things."

Mr. Driscoll and Emily, left alone, looked at each other fixedly. They had the air rather of antagonists than of friends.

"Would you mind telling me why you did that?" he asked sharply.

Emily took off her hat and smoothed her hair wearily. She did not answer.

"It didn't need a real push," went on Mr. Driscoll; "all she wanted was a tiny shove to finish her forever, that fool of a little woman. I wish to heaven I had had the chance!"

She smiled suddenly. "You might have shoved her off," she said, "but you're rather glad I didn't."

VIII

LIVES, after all, would be worth little if it were not for the effect of their crises. The wear and tear of years may suddenly be broken; the influences of all the past may suddenly be snapped. Yet crises themselves are but the coming to a head—the burst into consciousness—of things which have been long growing, long shaping, and are only now made manifest in some event. What man is slow to learn is, that it is not the event itself which counts, but the way in which he takes it.

Undoubtedly, something great had happened to Richard Faxon. Yet he scarcely seemed to know it. He sat in his club, smoking and playing cards, day after day; or went into the coun-

try, and rode for hours alone. He was thinner than usual, and his hair had a few sharp gray lines in it. There was a dull, listless acquiescence about him which was almost horrible. He seemed too tired to fight, too tired to move, too tired, even, to think.

The fiction of the separation was steadily kept up. Emily and Mr. Driscoll had seen that this was the one safeguard to prevent Dick from making public his resolution not to get a divorce. But everyone talked, and almost everyone wondered; especially when Larry Wharncliffe suddenly left, that spring, on somebody's yacht, for a cruise to Greece.

Emily, even in her trouble, had found herself laughing over the absurdity of Larry's going to Greece in search of oblivion. It showed, she argued, his utter cheapness and his lack of proportion, that he should choose such a setting for such an errand. If he had kept hold of Pinkie, or followed her to Paris—where she was now established, with her brother Harry as an after-thought—Emily could have forgiven him far sooner. Larry had not the courage to be frankly bad. His one effort was to be just respectable enough to be asked to go to the opera in New York. To be sure, he needed only a small figment for that; and Emily, in her wisdom, could already foresee the day when he would be sighed over, in his turn, and called poor Larry Wharncliffe.

As for Emily herself, she was keyed to the highest point of excitement. Unruffled and steady as she managed to seem, there was underneath a tense watchfulness which never let her eyes leave Dick—or her thoughts, for that matter, either. Mr. Driscoll, too, in his phlegmatic way, was upset. He had taken to abusing the servants at his club, and to talking about his digestion. They were both waiting; watching, with a strong conviction; hoping almost against hope.

The weeks dragged on. Then, one late afternoon—it was in early May—Emily telephoned Mr. Driscoll that she saw light.

Dick had been living with the old gentleman ever since he had sold his own house, just after the crash occurred. He was fortunately out when the telephone rang.

Emily's voice, Mr. Casimir could hear, was as tense as ever; but there was a strong note of relief in it.

"I have thought of a solution!" she called.

"Well?"

"Gibbsville!"

She could hear Mr. Casimir give his skeptical, meditative grunt.

"Now, *don't!*" said Emily. "It will work splendidly. Mr. Gibbs is going there next week in his private car. I have sent for him to come here to-night, and I shall boldly ask him to persuade Dick to go with him. He must—he simply *must*—be drawn by the novelty of the life and the strangeness of it all."

"My dear child, do you mean that Dick should turn miner?"

"I don't know. I only feel that he must turn something or it will be too late."

"Yes. I see. Well——"

Emily's voice broke a little. "Oh, Mr. Casimir, if Mr. Gibbs agrees, you will make him go, won't you? You can, you know. It'll be good from the worldly standpoint, too—it'll make people see that we haven't broken with the Gibbsses. It'll be good from every point of view."

"It really might do," observed Mr. Driscoll pensively. "Well, you see Gibbs. For that matter, you see Dick, too. You can get round him better than I."

"No, no. This is something he must decide without me. I—I should hate him if he didn't, Mr. Casimir."

"Yes, I suppose you are right. How we all come to you with our troubles, Emily! You must get sick and tired of us. You ought to hang out a sign: 'People with woes not admitted'—or something of that sort."

"I'm afraid it wouldn't do any good."

"Probably not. What good do any signs do, after all?" said Mr. Casimir gloomily. "No one keeps off the

grass. By the way, I want to tell you one of my sorrows right now. I am dreadfully upset. I ate salmon for dinner last night. Please give me consolation."

Emily laughed. "If that were all."

"It is all," said Mr. Casimir. "It fills my horizon, and ought to fill yours. See Gibbs, and then go to bed. You sound tired out."

"I'm not, especially. But it has been a long winter."

"Yes," said the old gentleman gently, "it has. Good night."

That evening Emily broached the matter to Mr. Gibbs. She was sitting in a darkened corner of the drawing-room when he was announced, her chair drawn up to the open window. Spring, after a harder winter than usual of snow and ice, had come early, with that new touch of healing and hope which only the first days of May can give. The night sky was wonderfully soft, and the stars twinkled peacefully above the glaring city lights. A little breeze blew gently in over the window-boxes of pink geranium and mignonette.

The attitude of Emily's head, resting against the red brocade of her chair, and her thin, sensitive hands loosely clasped in her lap, were somehow suggestive of infinite fatigue. The wind stirred her hair a little and ruffled the lace on her soft white dress. As Gibbs drew near, across the great room, he noticed, by the way, that her face was almost as white as her dress; and he saw what Mr. Casimir and Dick had both failed to see—that Emily was not strong.

Her eyes lighted quickly as she saw him. She rose and drew a chair beside her own.

"You are very good to answer my summons so promptly," she said. "As usual, business is my excuse. Aunt Adelaide is in her room, with a cold; and I thought this an excellent opportunity to see you."

Gibbs settled himself. "Sure," he answered genially. "No time like the present. What a good smell!"

"It's the mignonette in the boxes.

I always try to play at spring, even in town." She leaned her head back again, and turned her eyes to the night. "It's good, the spring, isn't it?"

Gibbs glanced at her swiftly.

"You're done up!" he said irrelevantly. "If you take my advice, you'll get out of this."

"Your prescription is for the wrong person. Here we are at my business, by the way. Mr. Gibbs, what is to be done with Dick?"

"Well, sooner or later, he'll do for himself."

"But that is the question—the open question: Will he? What would you advise for anyone in his position?"

"Work!" said Gibbs tersely.

"Ah! There we are! Suppose, then—suppose you take him West with you next week?"

Gibbs's eyes sharpened suddenly. "To Gibbsville?"

"Yes. To Gibbsville. You told me once that it was a training-ground for big men. Take him there—and wake him up—and make him a big man!"

She bent forward and laid her hand on his arm.

"He's got it in him," she went on, a little more hurriedly than usual. "He's got the beginnings of a big man in him, Dick has. It needs only, some little touch to start him. His money, his friends, his whole past life are all against him. But—give him the chance. From—from your daughter's point of view, I don't see that it would not be right. We want to keep up this idea of a mere separation, since there is—since there can be no question of divorce. If Dick is with you it will help all this. Oh, Mr. Gibbs, I—I know you wouldn't regret it if you helped Dick!"

"Do you want it as much as that?" said Gibbs slowly.

Emily's hand shook a little as she withdrew it from his arm.

"Yes, I do. I want it more than anything in the world."

"Well, he'd be leaving you—all."

"Yes."

"He'd be thrown into an entirely new life—a life that'd about spoil him for New York, I guess."

"Yes, I know."

"It'd be hard work, and plenty of it, if he took a berth with me. It might keep him there for three or four years before he could get home."

"I understand," said Emily steadily.

"And all the same, you want him to go?"

She smiled. "I've told you that I want it more than anything else in the world."

Gibbs struck his fist on the arm of his chair.

"Well, I'll do it! I'll take him out there, and interest him, and see what he's made of. Do you think he'll come with me next week?"

"He must."

Gibbs wrinkled his forehead. "Now, I tell you what we might do. The Tea Cup is about ten miles north—northwest of Gibbsville. Scattered all over that country are small clumps of three or four families, as far as Leesburg on the north, and Winton's Pass on the south. Sometimes—not often—some of them are sick. I had a man at the Tea Cup last year whose health had smashed up and who had to be in the saddle all day. He wasn't much of a doctor, but he knew enough for us. He rode all over the country, taking a mustard plaster here and setting a bone there, and he looked after the wives and babies of the Tea Cup hands. Last month that man died. Someone's got to fill his place."

"Yes?" Emily was listening breathlessly.

"Well, Faxon once told me that when he was in college he'd had a fancy to be a doctor. He took about a year and a half of the course, I think, didn't he?—and then gave it up. We're not particular about diplomas, you know. Let him pick up what he can, and lay in a stock of stuff, and I guess he'll do as well as poor Jackson. There's a cabin on Tea Cup Mountain, just near the mine, that Jackson had—a nice little place. He'd be on horseback all day; and I guess he wouldn't

mind the lonesomeness. Then, if he got interested, he could go up to Butte in the fall and learn some more in the hospital there; and someone could trundle the mustard plasters meanwhile. It'd be a hard life. But it would be a good start."

"It would be everything on earth. If we can only interest him, and awaken him—if we can only undo the harm—" She broke off suddenly. "Have you heard from Pinkie lately?"

"No. She don't write often. I guess she's still in Paris with Harry. She seems to take kindly to Paris."

"I am glad her brother is with her. She is very young and very pretty to be in such an anomalous position. Mr. Gibbs—I hope you have no hard feeling about the divorce—about Dick's not getting one."

"Well, I don't exactly know what Faxon's driving at; but, somehow, I rather think it's straight. I don't believe he knows very well himself, just now."

"The next months will be the turning-point," said Emily gravely. "And you will see some of the process. You will see the starting of a fine life, Mr. Gibbs—mark my words! You will have set the ball rolling. If Dick ever amounts to anything it will be through work; and if he works it will be through you. I shall not be there to see; but I shall be thinking—and hoping, hoping, hoping!"

Gibbs rose. "Is he home tonight?"

"Yes. He and Mr. Driscoll were both to be at home."

"Then I'll go right round there now. Whenever I've got anything of this sort to do I like to do it right off. The sooner Faxon makes up his mind the better. Perhaps—maybe you'd rather talk it over with him first?"

"That would be a great mistake, I think. This is a man's work, not a woman's."

"Well, I guess you're right. I'll go and do it now. And when I leave there, I'll telephone you what's happened."

Emily took his great rough hand between both of hers.

"Make him go!" she said, smiling.

"Oh, he'll be packing his trunks tomorrow—don't you worry. Anyway, I'll do my best."

"I know you will. Good night, then. I—do you know, I shall miss you when you have gone."

"I reckon I'll miss you," said Gibbs pensively. "I don't know, but I guess I will. You're just the kind I like. Well, good night."

And he went his way.

Emily, when she found herself alone, sank back in her chair, and sat there quietly, the cool little spring breeze blowing gently on her face. Her mind seemed a great white blank, too weary to take the imprint of any new emotion. She felt as if the whole pulse of her being depended on the one thing—this opportunity for Dick. Would he—could he—do it? If he went, there was always the chance of his succeeding; and failure itself, in such a case, would have a certain dignity. But if he stayed—if he stayed?

Her mind actually ached with going over it; the hopelessness of the case was so great. If he stayed, what could come to him but the final absorption into a little world, a little horizon, and the littlest of all lives?

Emily started suddenly and turned. Lane, the grave butler, was standing by the chair.

"If you please, miss," he said obsequiously, "Mr. Gibbs has just telephoned. He said he would not disturb you to speak to you himself tonight, but that I was to say to you that Mr. Faxon would go."

Emily straightened herself.

"That Mr. Faxon would go?"

"That Mr. Faxon would go."

She dismissed him with a nod. Then, alone again, she rose and went to the open window.

She saw the clear stars shining down on the quiet street. She noticed, vaguely, that the mignonette leaves needed thinning. She thought that Dick must have made up his mind very quickly—she had not expected to hear from Gibbs inside of an hour. And then she suddenly realized that this

was one of the great crises of her life, and that it had been settled for her by a telephone message, delivered by Lane, the butler.

So do most of our turning-points, after all, pass.

Emily's face dropped between her hands, and she burst out crying, helplessly and violently, like a tired child.

IX

Dick raised himself in his stirrups, and looked about him.

He was on the crest of a low hill, overlooking the wild country of the Onoto River. Before him, below the gentle fall of the hillside, stretched a deep, rolling valley. Bounding the horizon, on all sides, were huge, uneven masses of mountains, black as ink against the pale gray of the sky. It was just before dawn. The western mountains were beginning to turn the faintest possible rose, catching the deepening light slowly. The eastern were dark and grim, stern and mighty, in their dignity, their rugged splendor and their infinite loneliness.

Behind him stood a clump of small pines, a sentinel outpost to the valley entrance. Not a breath of air was stirring. A little breeze might rise with the dawn, and cool the parched earth before the torrid heat of the sun waxed in its strength. It was mid-August. For twenty-eight endless days not a drop of rain had fallen. The scant grass, at which Dick's horse was glancing wistfully, was burnt a seared, colorless brown, and rattled lifelessly as the animal moved his feet. Onoto Creek, a slim gray thread at the bottom of the valley, murmured faintly and wearily over the stones in its bed. The whole land, in its intense silence and isolation, seemed to gather a last strength from the cool darkness to meet the fiery heat of the new-born day. Only the mountains, in their endless might, stood above it all, mocking at the little changes of the seasons and the world, and holding their eternal heads to the sky.

Dick took off his hat, and ran his fingers through his hair. He was very tired. He had been in the saddle all the previous day, by a sick bed all the night before that; and when he had reached his own cabin last evening, and had thrown himself down for an hour's sleep, a man had ridden in from Winton's Pass, just the other side of Onoto Valley, to say that there was a sick child in one of the cabins on the mountain-side; and Dick had set off again at once.

He had come to this wonderful new life in the midst of an appalling tragedy. Early in June, when he was feeling his ground with the miners by day, and learning what he could from books most of the night, a woman had suddenly and mysteriously died at Langham, a small settlement some ten miles north of Dick's cabin. Her family kept the secret as long as possible; but within a week her husband and her two children were prostrate, and the work of evil was begun. By the end of the month smallpox was raging, in all its terrors.

The disease had spread, even among the scattered people, with incredible rapidity. The great drought which followed only made the situation more hideous. The miners' settlements, at the Tea Cup, and on Tea Cup Mountain, showed blots of charred ruins, where Dick and Gibbs had had houses burned, as a possible precaution. Patches of tiny gardens, where people had raised a few sparse, sickly plants only a few weeks ago, were blackened by fire and sun. Stray animals, whose owners were dead or dying, wandered from hut to hut, unheeded. Half the hands at the mine had gone away, and the other half were laying off, moving their families away, as best they might, or burying their dead in the little tract of ground which, until this horrible summer, had had only two or three mounds to break its surface.

Now, in August, the first fury seemed scarcely abated. The infection had spread to the more scattered settlers, where the distances were so great that the transportation of medicines and

necessary comforts was almost impossible. Gibbs, under Dick's direction, worked like a madman. He seemed able to bear any amount of fatigue, to be in the saddle incredible hours, to be capable—great rough creature that he was—of an extraordinary depth of tenderness and sympathy. During all those days there was the gleam in his eyes of the sight of danger, and its immense excitement. There was often a certain pride about him, too, as if he knew that he was working in fine company, as he watched a tall figure bending over a deathbed, or helping to carry a stiff form to the graveyard.

Thus, from day to day, they worked on, taking no thought of the future, or even of the moment to come. To make the best possible fight—to spare the worst pains—to save the most precious lives—that was their only creed. Whatever the gain, whatever the loss, it was a fine battle.

A red streak suddenly flashed on the heads of the pines across the valley. The sky grew a clear shell-pink, cloudless and spotless, its tint brightening every second. There was, for a moment, the breathless, wonderful suspense that comes over the world only at dawn. Then, over the black line of the eastern mountains, the sun rose.

Dick drew a long breath, as he looked at the blazing fire kindled on the mountain flank. He wondered what the day would bring—whether life or death, or sorrow or joy, or success or failure; and then he suddenly remembered that he was a man, with a man's strength, a man's power, and a man's work to do.

He rode swiftly down the hillside and along the valley. He drew rein only once—at Onoto Creek for his horse to drink. The animal was almost spent, and drank greedily, snuffing the water gratefully through his nostrils. Dick patted his neck; it gave him a sort of pleasure, the horse's evident joy in the cool, clear water. Three months before he would have laughed at the idea of his ever again taking pleasure in such a little thing as that.

About two miles farther on, in the

woods just above the rough, scarred trail he was following, he saw a thin thread of blue smoke; and he realized that he had reached his destination.

It was one of the rougher cabins of the region, standing alone, in a small clump of spruces, and looking, from its shelter, over the length and breadth of Onoto Valley. A man, tall and lean, with a dirty bandage around his head, and a gaunt, hungry look in his keen eyes, was sitting on the door-sill, smoking. He was the picture of indolent pain and hopelessness.

Dick dismounted, and tied his horse to a tree.

"I'm the Gibbsville doctor," he said. "There's a sick child here, isn't there?"

The man rose stiffly and jerked his thumb toward the doorway.

"She's there," he said laconically. "I guess she's dying, too."

Dick pushed his way in.

It was a squalid little place, one small room, with bare log walls and a trampled earth floor, serving for everything. One or two long plank benches seemed to be the beds; and there was a rough table and some crazy stools. In spite of the heat, a fire was burning. Before it, on the ground, wrapped in a filthy coverlid, her eyes bright with fever and her face distorted with swelling, lay the sick child. A woman, with a baby in her arms, was on one of the plank beds, moaning and crooning to herself. She was a sickly, starved-looking creature, with tangled hair; and her thinness was almost horrible.

Dick picked up the child—she might have been seven or eight years old—threw aside the coverlid, and carried her to the light. He opened the shutter-window, and looked at her closely. His face set sternly.

"How long has she been sick?" he said.

The woman raised her head and stared at him stupidly.

"It's the Gibbsville doctor," grunted the man in the doorway. He was watching the proceedings with skeptical indifference.

"She's been sick since a week yesterday," said the woman.

"Have you been to Langham lately?" Dick turned to the man.

"Yes. About ten days ago."

"There long?"

"Four or five hours."

"Did you buy anything?"

"Yes. I bought that blanket."

Dick laid the child down very tenderly. Then he strode over to the fire, caught the blanket with his boot, and kicked it into the flames.

"You bought that from Arliss," he said. "He's been making money on dead people's infected belongings. You'll have to clear right out of here. This child has smallpox."

The woman suddenly screamed. She rose from the bed and tottered across the floor, clutching the baby she held to her thin breast.

"Will this one get it?" she panted. "Will this one get it? Oh, doctor, do something for us—for God's sake, doctor—do something for us!"

"I'll do something for you right away," said Dick. "I'll vaccinate you. First of all, have you got any clothes except what you're wearing? And the baby—has he? Well, then, get what you can, and go out into the fresh air and change them. You can throw the dress you take off right in the door. I'm going to fumigate this place."

He set swiftly to work. Slung on his saddle he had carried fresh sheets and bandages, and his medicine-case was already open on the table. He moved about the room with a quick determination that was merciless. In twenty minutes the sick child was wrapped in clean blankets, lying in pure air, and the tart, pungent smell of disinfectants drifted out to the summer morning.

Dick stepped to the door. The man was clumsily tying some rags into a bundle, and the woman was sitting on a tree stump, whimpering over the baby. She was a pitiful-looking creature, seen in the glare of the sunlight, who might once, in spite of her thinness, have been pretty. Her eyes

were wide with terror and her hands were shaking helplessly.

"Now," said Dick briskly, "have you a horse?"

"One."

"Well, somehow you'll have to pile on it, with your wife and the baby, and ride in to Langham. I'll give you a letter to Mr. Gibbs, who'll be there today. He'll see that you're all three of you put in an isolated house, for the present; and he'll look out for you until I can see you again, the end of the week. If you start now you'll get there about sunset. He's due there some time this morning. Don't try to travel fast. When you halt at noon, don't stay in the sun, and don't drink anything at Langham when you get there. Above all, don't lose your grit. You're going to be all right, and I don't think any one of you'll get it."

The woman moaned. "But what'll become of Mamie?"

"Mamie?" said Dick. "Mamie? Oh, I'm going to stay here and take care of Mamie."

The man's face changed a little. "Do you reckon she'll get through?" he said.

"I don't know. I'll do my best for her, in any case. Now, what I want you to give Gibbs is this."

He scribbled a few words:

These people are from Onoto Valley. The child here has it. I am sending the mother and father and baby in, to escape, if possible. Keep them isolated. I'll have to stay here and look out for the child. She will probably die, and I shall get back to Langham early Thursday. If I don't turn up then, you can understand that she is better and that someone must be here by Thursday night to take my place. I can't stay here longer than that. Don't forget the ointment at Butte.—R. F.

He gave the slip of paper to the man.

"Take that to Mr. Gibbs—Gibbs, of the Tea Cup, you know. Here, I'll lend you a hand with the horse."

"Can't I go in and say good-bye to her?" the woman broke in passionately. "I'm her mother, ain't I? Oh, what'll she do without me, what'll she do without me?"

"Oh, be quiet!" said the man rough-

ly. He had finished saddling his horse, with Dick's help. "You'll only make things worse with your bawling. There—I guess that's all. Come along!"

He lifted her to the horse's back, and mounted in front of her, with the same stolid, weary indifference. Then, as he took up the reins, he turned and looked down at the tall figure standing beside them. Dick's hat was off. The sun beat upon his stern, set face, which was burnt almost copper color. His eyes, quick and piercing, had a hard gleam in them. His sleeves were rolled up above his elbows, and his strong, roughened hands were poised on his hips.

"So you're the Gibbsville doctor, are you?" said the man half curiously.

"Yes, I am. Now be off with you!"

The woman leaned her face against her husband's back, and burst into hysterical sobbing. The choked, tortured sound drifted back to Dick as the little caravan rode off down the valley.

"Poor souls!" he muttered. "The woman had a good face. Her eyes reminded me of someone—I wonder who? I expect the man's in for it, though—poor devil!"

He went back slowly into the cabin.

Mamie was awake. She was looking about her, in bewilderment, at the change in the little place—at the long, shining medicine glass beside her—at the cool, soft nightgown she wore—at the white sheet, hung over the doorway, wet with carbolic acid and glistening in the sun. Then she caught sight of the tall, strange man. She looked at him helplessly for a moment.

Dick sat down by the bed, and took the tiny hands in his.

"Well, little lady!" he said. "Here's someone come to stay with you and help you get well!"

For a second longer she hesitated. Then her great gray eyes softened into a smile.

"By Jove—Emily!" laughed Dick. "I see it now! Do you know, your eyes are like the eyes of someone I used to

play with when she was just about as big as you!"

And Mamie loved him instantly.

He tended her all day, with quick, gentle care. She was not delirious, and there was but little to do, save to watch her and make her comfortable. Dick was glad of the quiet of the darkened cabin and the rest of sitting still. He had worked harder than ever the past few days, and he was unusually tired.

Night fell, clear and starry. He had made himself a bed on the floor, with his head in the open doorway. Mamie was sleeping quietly. He threw himself down for a little rest, and looked out over the great sweep of Onoto Valley, lying, vast and solemn, far below him. The stars were brilliantly yellow, burning tongues of flame in the dark sapphire of the sky. There was the deep emerald of the spruces and pines, where they lifted their tall heads to the night, and the soft breath of a little wind stirring in their branches. And far off, against the horizon, was drawn the great, ink-black line of the mountains.

Mamie stirred suddenly, and spoke. He rose, and went over to her.

"Does it hurt much, honey?" he asked.

Her eyes—which were so like Emily's eyes—filled with tears.

"Will you please hold my hand?" she said.

Dick sat by the bed, and took her hand firmly in his. She smiled up at him again; then she fell asleep.

An overpowering weariness swept over him. His head dropped forward on the bed, heavily; a moment later he, too, was asleep.

Dick never knew how long he slept. He woke with a horrible throbbing pain in his forehead, and found that the sun was shining in his eyes. He was stiff and sore, from the strain of his position, and he could see nothing but red flames. A curious feeling crept through his hand, which still held the child's. As his eyes cleared he rose

unsteadily and looked down at the bed. Mamie was dead.

For a moment he could not stir. The strange giddiness held him motionless. He stared stupidly at the stiff, small figure, its rigid limbs and its fixed eyes. There seemed a tragic pathos in the death of this little creature of the wilderness, so defenseless and so lonely. There seemed to him, for a moment, a pathos beyond all human conception in it.

He roused himself with an effort. He must set to work at once. Other lives were waiting for him, and he had not a moment to lose. He rolled up his sleeves and bent over the little body, closing the eyes and folding the small hands. As he did so he suddenly caught sight of a red spot on his own bare arm.

Dick went to the door and looked out into the blazing sunlight. Was he mad? Was he in some crazy nightmare? He—a well man yesterday—a well man last night—He set his teeth, uncovered his arm, and looked again.

In that moment his whole soul rose within him and stood ready. He was face to face, at last, with his fate. The time had come for him to play the last desperate round of the game—to struggle, madly, blindly, furiously, for the last time. He had had ninety-nine chances out of a hundred against him; and, by some miracle, he had won, until now. Here he was—he—Richard Faxon—who had come West for adventure, for change, for freedom—and in a few hours he would probably die, like a sick dog in a kennel, of smallpox, in this hut on Onoto Mountain.

His mind worked with a frightful, clear rapidity. This was Wednesday morning. Gibbs was not to send anyone to relieve him until the following morning—which meant that no one could reach the cabin until Thursday night. Between now and then there were delirium, starvation and death.

It was forty-two miles to Langham. He could no more sit a horse than he could fly. His weakness was growing every second, and the pains in his head

were blinding. The sweat began to pour from his forehead, and he leaned against the wall, panting, in his agony, and trying to see what last little thing he had strength to do. Mamie—there was Mamie. He would try to bury Mamie.

The glaring sunlight swept in, beating on the little face with a bright cruelty. Yes—he would bury Mamie. Her eyes were so gray—so gray—so like Emily's—

Dick took one step forward. Then he fell face downward, on the floor, beside the dead child.

X

EMILY pressed her face against the car window, and, for the hundredth time, strained to look out into the night.

The train was rushing along a narrow gorge. It was raining hard. Every now and then she could catch a glimpse of a wall of wet rock, glistening in the light from the car windows, and of dank, drooping ferns, heavy with rain. Otherwise, there was only the rumble of the train on an uphill grade and the constant shriek of the whistle.

Emily closed her eyes. Now that her journey was almost at an end she looked back on it as on a sort of whirling nightmare: the sudden telegram, when she was at dinner one evening—her instant decision—her flinging a few things into a bag and barely catching the Wickford boat from Newport; then her frantic anxiety of going over the telegram, again and again, on the night trip—her wondering where or how it had all happened; and why, even in the flimsy yellow paper, Gibbs managed to convey such a note of horror. One of the servants had met her in New York, and had hurried to the station with her. There a tantalizing delay occurred. A special train had been ordered, and, by some misunderstanding, it was not ready. Emily had paced the platform for what seemed a lifetime; and had then taken the regular train, which was just leaving. She was to be followed by her

trunks and the housekeeper, who, Mrs. Blair had plaintively pleaded, was necessary for propriety. Emily had telegraphed everywhere to find Mr. Driscoll, and had not discovered his whereabouts.

Then the three endless—endless—days on the train. She had had five telegrams from Gibbs, along her route. The others missed her, or were lost forever. She only knew that Dick was still alive—in desperate straits, indeed, but still alive. That was something. Gibbs had bribed a doctor from Butte to come to Onoto Mountain. That she knew, too; and that he himself never left Dick's bedside. His telegrams—sent by a rider into Langham—were very confused and vague. There was nothing to do but wait, and to gather strength for what was to come.

The train slowed up, gave a sharp jerk, and stopped. It was over at last.

Out in the night it was still raining. As Emily stepped to the wet, shining platform, a man, dressed in a heavy raincoat, came forward.

"Miss Blair?" he said.

"Yes. Are you ready?"

He caught up her bag and hurried to the end of the platform. A two-seated wagon, with a pair of nervous little horses, was standing there. Emily got into it, silently.

"I'm afraid you'll get rather wet," said the man hurriedly.

She shook her head and pulled the rubber laprobe around her. She was trying to summon courage to ask a question.

The man sprang in and took the reins; and they rattled off over the board-roads of Gibbsville.

Emily noticed vaguely the flashing lights of the houses and the generally prosperous air of the town. The rain beat against her face and refreshed her. She took off her hat, her hands trembling a little, and let the cool drops fall on her hair. Finally she found her voice.

"What was your last news?" she said unsteadily.

"There was no change, Miss Blair, one way or the other. Mr. Gibbs sent a messenger to Langham this morning at dawn, so that you should have the last news. Of course, as long as the doctor holds his own we have more hope."

The doctor! It gave her the most pitiful little pride to hear it.

They were in the quieter streets now, dashing along at a breakneck speed. The spirit of fight rose suddenly in Emily.

"I *will* get there," she said under her breath, "and he *will* live."

She turned to the man again.

"Are you John Walker?"

"Yes. I'm one of Mr. Gibbs's head men at the Tea Cup. I—Dr. Faxon saved my wife's life last month. Hers was one of the worst cases. We've never had anyone here just like Dr. Faxon."

Emily winced. "Will you—can you—tell me——?"

John Walker drew his coat collar about his dripping face.

"There's nothing to tell. There was no change this morning."

"Yes. But I want to know how he fell ill, and when; and why he's at this cabin at Onoto Mountain."

"Why, he—he went there to look after a sick child. He was taken ill there; and of course, he couldn't be moved."

"Who was there to take care of him?"

"Mr. Gibbs has been with him right along."

"Yes, but when he was first taken ill?"

"Well, there was no one. He had sent the child's mother and father in to Langham. They had the infection."

"And he was alone, with the child, on that mountain—when he was taken ill?"

"Yes."

"But how——?" Her voice broke pitifully.

Walker braced his broad shoulders.

"You see, Mr. Gibbs heard of it just by the smallest chance. Gaines, the man Dr. Faxon sent in—the father of the child at Onoto Mountain—well,

he's rather a bad lot. He got drunk the night he reached Langham, and began to talk about the doctor's abusing him, and sending him away from his own place, and preaching infection to him; and he said that, for the matter of that, Dr. Faxon'd be down soon enough himself. He swore he'd seen a rash on the doctor's arm, when he looked at him in the strong sunlight. Well, anyway, Mr. Gibbs had come in to look after the man, and he heard what he was saying. He knew he was drunk—but somehow, he got worried. He waited till the next evening—Wednesday evening—and then he took a man and started for Onoto Mountain. You see, Dr. Faxon had said he'd stay there and take care of the child."

"Yes?"

"Well, when he got there, he found the doctor—down."

"Was he unconscious?"

"He was raving mad," said John Walker almost roughly; "and he was starving."

Emily swayed against him suddenly. Her white lips moved again.

"And the child?"

"The child was dead."

It was more than an hour before she spoke. She closed her eyes and tried to bear the agony, face to face. She went through every minute of torture that Dick had endured, her youth and her hope leaving her, and the look creeping into her eyes which comes only with unspeakable horror. Here was she—fed, alive, strong; and while she had been lazily frittering away her time in Newport this thing had been happening.

Emily felt as if she must scream with pain. She bit her lips until they bled, and her hands twisted about each other convulsively. She, who would have given her life to save him an hour's unhappiness—she, who would have sacrificed everything on earth to his smallest pleasure—she, whose one thought, one faith, one hope, was in his hands—had not been there. That was the summit of her Calvary: she had not been there.

With an immense effort she braced herself. She opened her eyes and looked about her. They were driving along a rough, uneven road, through what seemed to be a flat, open country. Some lights were winking at them in the distance. Where were they? She had a horrible feeling that they were just leaving Gibbville.

Walker glanced at her kindly. Rough creature that he was, he had, all through this long hour, understood.

"That's Langham," he said. "We've made good time, Miss Blair. Now, it's a quarter to two. I've got horses ready here, but—wouldn't you rather wait and push on at dawn? We can't travel very fast at night, anyway."

She shook her head silently.

"Can you ride?" he asked.

"Yes." Her own voice sounded like a mockery to her. "I can ride well enough. When shall we get there?"

"Well, we can hardly hope to make it in better than eight hours. Somewhere near ten o'clock, I guess. We'll do our best."

She had a confused memory of Langham. The rattle of board-roads again, some lights, one or two men calling through the night, and their suddenly stopping; and then her mounting the horse waiting for her, and her seeing John Walker, sitting his horse like a great, grim statue, beside her. She felt hands fumbling with her saddle; a man was tying her little bag in front of her. She laughed suddenly. The idea of her wanting the bag was so utterly ridiculous.

The rain ceased as they galloped out of Langham. The night air was cool and refreshing, a wonderful relief after the heavy heat of the day. The board-roads fell behind them again, and the lights grew fewer. About a mile farther on, they left the road and struck into the Onoto trail.

It was almost impossible to make any speed. Often they were forced into a walk for a mile or two, striving to keep their horses from holes and branching tree roots, and to escape the

low boughs which crashed against them at every turn and showered them with drops of rain. The great silence and loneliness of the woods at night fell upon them. The horses breathed hard and worked with a will, their flanks steaming with sweat and their mouths white with foam. The light which Walker carried glanced on the gray tree trunks, the heavy underbrush and the glistening of the wet leaves. In all Emily's life to come she never forgot the woods that night. They stopped and breathed their horses as the day was breaking. Somewhere, through the dim light, Walker made out a little brook, tinkling over the stones. He took a tin cup from his saddle, filled it and brought it to Emily.

"Drink that, Miss Blair. It's good mountain water. Are you all right?"

Emily smiled bravely. She had herself in hand again.

"All right. Shall—must we stop long?"

"We've got to wait a moment or two. We can't risk over-tiring the horses. We'll make twice as good time from now on, you know."

She looked anxiously at the smoking horses, standing patiently for their moment's rest. She and Walker had dismounted, and were stretching their cramped limbs. They had ridden most of the trail bent almost flat in their saddles.

"You ride well," said Walker simply. "I wouldn't have thought anyone who wasn't used to it could have managed that wood trail at night."

"I have always ridden," said Emily. "I love horses. My cousin—" She broke off.

"Yes, they say the doctor's a pretty good judge of horseflesh. He's got a nice little beast of his own. I've never seen anything finer than the way he broke in a colt over at the mine in June!"

Emily sat down on the ground, and clasped her hands in her lap. Her gray eyes were fixed on the gathering light in the sky.

"He was always fearless as a little

boy," she said. "And he was not only brave, but very gentle. I have often thought that was the secret of his influence with animals. He has always been that, Dick—very brave and very gentle."

Her eyes gleamed suddenly, as if the dawn had struck them.

"Whatever happens to him," she went on half aloud, "he has never been a coward and he has never been unkind."

Walker turned away and cleared his throat. He told his wife afterward that he didn't believe God often made such good sports as Emily was that night.

At about eight o'clock they came to the first fording of Onoto Creek. They slowly made their way across, the horses picking their steps with delicate care. The water eddied and rippled about them, sparkling like liquid sunshine. It had become a brilliantly beautiful day. The sky overhead was a limpid turquoise, unflecked by any tiniest cloud. It was going to be very hot.

As they rode up the farther bank of the creek a mishap overtook them. Emily's little mare slipped on a loose stone and almost fell, wrenching her right foreleg badly. John Walker dismounted and examined the animal hurriedly.

"What luck!" he said. "We'll have to spare her a bit, Miss Blair. This looks to me like a nasty sprain. Ride her as carefully as you can."

They pushed on, making far slower progress. The horse limped painfully, and was continually stumbling again. They had to pick and choose every inch of the way, and often pause and rest the little animal. She worked with a will, but she was evidently suffering, and she lagged more at every mile.

Emily's courage, which had lasted all through that endless journey—its mishaps, its upsets, its delays—almost ebbed. It was so miserable to have so nearly reached the goal, and now to be helplessly delayed, held back, when every moment was an hour, and every hour a lifetime. When, far past eleven

o'clock, they reached the entrance to Onoto Valley—the very spot where Dick had stood and watched the sun rise—she turned to Walker in despair.

"She *can't!*" she said helplessly. "She's almost falling at every step. What are we to do?"

Walker set his teeth. "She's got to get across the valley," he answered grimly. "Neither one of us can go on alone. Pull her up gently. She's just got to."

And somehow the little mare held out—held out until they were mounting the trail again, on the far side of the valley, and looking every minute for some sign of the cabin in the distance. Then she stumbled, for the last time, and fell.

John Walker sprang off his horse, to help Emily extricate herself. As he did so, they both suddenly stood motionless, transfixed by a thin little sound which had broken the stillness of the woods. It had come from the hillside, just above them. It was unmistakably a man's voice, calling.

"It's Gibbs!" said Walker excitedly. "By heaven, it's Gibbs! We're there—do you hear, Miss Blair, we're there! Can you manage the rest on foot? Here—wait—the trail must strike in somewhere here. Is it below, on your side? No—I've got it! Do you see?—it runs right up that bank. Can you do it?"

Emily gathered her strength. Then she ran, like a deer, up the bank.

She stumbled at every turn, the soft earth giving way beneath her. The underbrush was a wild tangle, and caught her feet, and dragged at her dress. Still the voice grew nearer. She ran on, faster than ever. Her skirt was in tatters, her hands were scratched and bleeding. Then, all at once, she saw the cabin, with Gibbs standing in front of it, calling down the valley.

She ran forward, her face ashen gray and her breath almost gone. She half fell against Gibbs, and clutched his arm.

"Is he alive?" she gasped. "Oh, Mr. Gibbs—is he alive?"

Gibbs caught her hands fast. There was a misty look in his keen eyes.

"He's alive; and he's stronger. He's pretty clear in his head, now, too. Poor little lady—poor little lady! And you ran clean up that bank! What a woman you are!"

She panted for a moment, struggling with an overpowering weakness. Then she spoke again, more quietly.

"Can I go to him?"

"Now?"

"Now."

"I—don't you want something to drink first?"

"No, no."

She followed Gibbs, half blindly, to the door, scarcely seeing where she was going. He put his arm about her, and led her across the threshold.

"Keep hold of yourself," he said gently. "Here he is."

Dick lay on a cot-bed, his head dark against the rough pillow, his eyes closed, and his arms stretched helplessly on the blankets. On one side the Butte doctor stood, bending over him. The whole cabin was very dark and quiet.

Emily sank on her knees. She saw nothing but the look of mortal suffering on Dick's face.

"Think what he has to live for!" she whispered piteously. "Think what he has to live for——"

The doctor took out his watch and felt Dick's pulse. Then he motioned Emily to bend nearer. He and Gibbs stepped aside.

Dick's eyelids fluttered, and he lifted one of his hands. A moment later he opened his eyes and they met Emily's.

He looked at her for a long time, seeming, in that supreme frankness, to understand all that had gone before, whether of life or of death. Then he spoke.

"Emily," he said, "Emily——"

And he turned his face back to life.

XI

It was a sunny February morning, six years after.

In the garden of an old house in South Carolina everything was blooming. The vines were weighted with clematis, the lilacs were purpling the bushes, the jonquils flashed like the sun itself in the midst of dark green sheaves.

The garden itself was a tangled, quaint old place, surrounded by a hedge of lilac and privet, and in its turn surrounding a small white house—so dignified and prim and quiet, in spite of its diminutive size, that not the most vulgar-minded would have called it a cottage. At every window of the house, too, and on the little porch, there were flowers; and a periwinkle vine, more impertinent than its neighbors, was gaily attacking a brass plate on the small white gate set in the hedge, which bore the name, "Dr. Richard Faxon."

In the centre of the brick-walk leading from the gate to the house, in the full blaze of the sunshine, stood our old friend Gussie Regan. She was a little plumper, a little stiffer and a little more pronounced than when we met her six years ago. A large garnet and moonstone ring flashed on her left hand, and she was looking at it admiringly, as she brushed and shook a long switch of gray hair.

A few steps from her, on the brick-walk, in an old-fashioned beehive chair, his Panama hat tilted comfortably over his eyes and an obviously perfect cigar in his mouth, sat Mr. Casimir Driscoll. He was watching Gussie lazily; and there was a suggestion of infinite peace about him.

Gussie gave the switch a vigorous twirl, and shook it out in the sunlight.

"So," she said conclusively, "I come."

"Yes, so I see," returned Mr. Driscoll, stretching out one foot in a gingerly manner. "Lord, I have got the gout! We all come, it appears to me."

"Of course, Mr. Driscoll, I wasn't one to have Miss Blair pack her own clothes, with her maid sick with the chickenpox and help so scarce. 'Gussie,' she says to me, 'I'm off South for

the winter, with my aunt, to be near Dr. Faxon. Cora,' she says, 'is sick. Chickenpox may or may not be lasting. If it goes through her whole family, which is eight, it'll be slow. Come along with me as my maid,' she says, 'and get a change of air.' Well, as I say, I wasn't the one to refuse. I come."

She sniffed severely, and, taking the end of the switch between her teeth she began to braid it neatly.

"When we first come here, at Christmas-time, I says to Miss Blair: 'Well, Miss Blair,' I says, 'I'll do my best for you, and I'll try to stand the doctor's nigger cook. But I must say that I'll thank my stars,' I says, 'when Mr. Driscoll comes, and you and Mrs. Blair move to the hotel.'"

"I'm sorry they could not have stayed. But there wasn't room, with me here, I suppose."

Gussie glanced cautiously toward the gate.

"I'll tell you something in private, Mr. Driscoll," she said in a loud whisper. "There's one person that don't pretend as she used to: and that's Miss Emily Blair!"

Mr. Driscoll puffed at his cigar in silence. "Well," he ejaculated finally.

"That's the gospel truth. She don't. I don't know what's come over her, but she's got a new look in the eyes. You haven't seen her lately, have you, sir?"

"Not for a long time. It must be nearly three years. It is almost that since I had a good American drink. You see, my young friend, I am the kind of person whom the world somehow never supposes to have a family. I haven't much of a one, thank God; but until a few months ago, I was possessed of a maiden aunt. She lived in Paris, and was very aged, and left her money to orphanages, and homes for desolate cats. Three years ago she cabled me that she was dying. I pulled up my stakes, and sailed at a few hours' notice, without even comforts for the voyage. Oh, Lord, that voyage! Well, after, as I say, nearly three years of waiting, with myself

and her pet poodle dog sitting patiently at her bedside, she slowly, monotonously, pompously died. She always did everything slowly, my aunt. When I get to heaven she'll only just be turning up in the celestial choir. So I've missed all my friends, all my interests, all my comforts for three years; and I'm anxious with all the anxiety left in me, to see Miss Blair."

"Well, as I say, she told me to tell you she'd come down from the hotel the first thing this morning, to see you. She'll come every day, for that matter. She's going on keeping house for the doctor."

"Really?"

"Yes. And oh, my, it needs a patience to keep this house, it does. Dirty niggers strolling in and out, and office hours from two till half-past five, and crowds of city people to tell the doctor about their hearts and their lungs—and it's my firm opinion they haven't got any—and I don't know what all. Then every evening he goes buggy-riding round the country, taking care of people that don't pay him a cent. And when you think that a few years ago he didn't know the difference between a plaster and a pill, all I can say is that it beats me!"

Mr. Driscoll was thoughtful for a moment.

"And the potted flowers in the house and the garden?"

Gussie pointed to the flower-beds with a dramatic gesture.

"Miss Emily Blair, Mr. Driscoll! Miss Emily Blair—in her best dress and no apron. She done it all. And what's worse, she's got someone to learn her the typewriter, so she can write his letters for him."

"Ah!" said Mr. Driscoll lightly, "how very nice that is! Well, I think I shall stroll indoors in search of a drink. I wish I had my own leather chair here." He rose with a groan. "I wonder what sins I committed in my youth that I am so grievously afflicted in mine age!"

Gussie stood aside on the path, waiting for him to pass. She watched him narrowly, as he made his way

toward the house. She was evidently struggling with an impulse to talk.

"May I be so bold as to ask a question?" she brought out finally. "For goodness' sake, look out for that lower step, sir! Well, do—does anyone ever hear anything of—of Mrs. Faxon?"

The old gentleman turned sharply. He met her eyes for a moment; then he smiled.

"My dear young friend," he said pleasantly, "I am not far from seventy years old. True, I have not had the advantage of being in the hairdressing trade; nevertheless, I have watched life very closely. Let me give you a piece of advice: namely, to mind your own business."

And he limped slowly in to Richard's office.

It was a bright, comfortable room, lined with bookcases, and lit by long French windows, which gave directly on the little piazza without. Everything was arranged with admirable neatness and precision; yet somehow there was a curiously unrestful feeling about the room. There was a total absence of photographs—a complete lack of anything personal—a feeling that this was but part of a polished machine—perfect, well ordered, keen, competent; but only a machine, after all.

Mr. Driscoll, with a sigh, seated himself at Dick's desk, puffed thoughtfully at his cigar, and, his eyes half closed, looked back across the years.

So Emily found him a few moments later.

She had stepped softly along the piazza and in at one of the French windows; and she stood watching him for a moment, unseen. He was really older, at last, was Mr. Casimir. His face was more lined and distinctly redder. He was bent, and his hands were knotted with gout. The one unchanged thing about him seemed his small, bright eyes, under their bushy, gray eyebrows. He was breaking, he was bending—one could see that; yet he still looked out at life with his old keenness, he still judged with his old precision, he still watched with his

old care. Emily went up to his chair, moving a little uncertainly, for her eyes were full of tears. She slipped her hand into his, and stood looking down at him. The old gentleman started, and tried to rise; but she pushed him gently back. And so they remained, for a little while, in silence, realizing that this was one of the moments in life when words are not needed.

"Three years!" said Emily at last, brushing her hand across her eyes. "Three awful, solid years! How I hated that aunt!"

She put down her sunshade, and drew up a chair beside his. He held out his hand to her.

"My dear child," he said gruffly, "I really am confoundedly fond of you, you know. Dear me, how well you look! If you go on at this rate you will soon degenerate into being pretty."

"You are speaking in a moment of emotion, Mr. Casimir. Be careful! Don't tell me I look young, for I do not want to think you senile."

"Gray hair," pursued Mr. Driscoll, screwing up his eyes critically, "is becoming to you. That one white streak through those black waves is very effective. Oh, my dear Emily, if your hair were purple I'd like it! I'm so glad to be in the land of civilization again that I'm actually trying to diet, in order to avoid a foreign cure next summer—weakly, pitifully, foolishly, perhaps—but still dieting."

"Tell me, how are you?"

"I'm well enough. I had an abominable indigestion last autumn, which nearly finished me. My doctor said it was Russian caviar—an old weakness of mine, Emily. It was sent to me from Petersburg, and as for flavor!—Well, it *wasn't* Russian caviar. It was drinking lukewarm drinks in that muggy hole, London. Oh, dear me, I hate London!"

"But you were in Paris most of the time?"

"Yes. Of course, one always adores Paris. When I was young, I enjoyed making a fool of myself there; and when I outlived that I enjoyed seeing other men make fools of themselves.

Then one can eat in Paris. But now, my dear, you must begin yourself. Who would have thought of this—who would have thought of this!"

He waved his hand, looking incredulously about the room.

Emily laughed, and began to twist her handkerchief around her fingers.

"This room, you mean?"

"No," said Mr. Driscoll curtly. "I don't mean this room. I mean Dick."

"Ah, Dick!"

She rose suddenly, went to the open window, and closed it. Then she turned back to Mr. Casimir.

"It is rather chilly, still," she said. "Let us begin with Dick, then. Hasn't it been—wonderful?"

"Yes, my dear, it has." The old gentleman sighed. "One of the best things that has ever crossed my path; that's what it has been. When I used to get your letters, Emily, I simply couldn't believe it, half the time. I've never been able to decide which was finer—his fight out there in the West, or his fight through the Physicians and Surgeons. They were both—well, first class."

"Yes."

"You remember, I was away when you brought him back from Gibbsville. But I always think of someone's saying to me, afterward, that it was the most wonderful resurrection of an entire man that had ever taken place. *You—*"

"It was the miners," said Emily simply, "and his illness."

"And his work. And you."

Emily bit her lip suddenly. "Well, as I wrote you, his work has been extraordinary. They thought really everything of him at the hospital; they say he has a remarkable career before him. And then the labor of it—he got through in four years what should have taken him five. He got through with honors, Mr. Casimir."

"*Cum laude?*"

"*Cum laude*. I—we were fearfully proud."

Mr. Driscoll banged the table with his fist.

"I told you so!" he exclaimed tri-

umphantly. "I always told you so! It took him a little while, but he worked it out. He got there. Oh, by Jove, it was splendid!"

"I remember Mr. Gibbs saying, the day we left Gibbsville, that it had been a fine show," said Emily, smiling. "Ah, Mr. Casimir, if you'd only seen Mr. Gibbs in those days!"

"Yes, there's a wonderful character. I'm glad that, as I didn't have the chance, he did. Well, now go back to Dick. What happened when he left the hospital?"

"He had the offer of place of assistant to old Dr. Markham here. Of course, it sounded ridiculous. There were one or two splendid openings for him in New York, and with his record he could have made an extraordinary beginning there. But he instantly accepted this. I—sometimes it's hard to know why he does things, now."

"Have you forgotten that this same Dick used to be dependent on you for everything?" asked Mr. Casimir, smiling.

Emily laughed; but she did not answer.

"Well, as I say, he came here. Curiously enough, that same winter old Dr. Markham died."

"Like my aunt. God bless him," interpolated Mr. Driscoll gravely.

"It was really beautifully convenient. Of course, Dick succeeded to the practice." She bent forward suddenly, and laid her forehead against the table. "He's coming out on top."

Mr. Casimir grunted sympathetically.

"And his own life?" he asked presently.

"Well," said Emily, "that again is the same. He has never flinched for the smallest moment."

"About the divorce?"

"Yes."

Mr. Driscoll murmured something under his breath. It sounded like "Damned quixotic rot."

"You had better pluck up your courage, if you mean to tell him so. He is absolutely merciless about it—so merciless that it seems scarcely human."

In six years his first determination has never altered a hair's breadth. He cares no more for the divorce itself than you or I. If it had all come about differently, he would probably have divorced her as quickly as she would have divorced him. But there was something in the way she did the thing—something in the cold-blooded, calculated disgrace of it—which froze him. He says—well, to be frank, he says she went to the devil, and that she can stay there." She gave a little laugh. "I am sometimes almost *afraid* of Dick these days, Mr. Casimir."

Mr. Driscoll jerked his chair around and looked warily toward the door.

"This past autumn," he said in a low voice, "I heard something of—Pinkie."

"Ah!" said Emily quickly.

"Yes. Freddy Haines was at Aix, and saw her." He sank back again. "He said it was distinctly—painful. Poor little fool!"

Emily's color changed a little. "Is it that?"

"Yes," returned Mr. Casimir slowly, "it is that. She knocks about, from cure to cure, with the worst type of foreign puppy-dog at her heels. She has dyed her hair, too. She seems to have endless money, Haines says. Of course I know Dick was generous, and then her father—oh, let us by all means be kind, my dear Emily. Well, she did what hundreds of other women do; and there was no reason to suppose she couldn't make port. If Larry had only had the decency to stick to her, divorce or no divorce, one would hate her more and pity her less."

"I fancy that is the reason she has never tried America."

"Larry? Yes, I fancy it is. He, dear soul, is decorating New York as usual, and has taken to sentimentality and talking about his past. Ah, my dear child, it was a very dirty row—a very dirty row!"

"Yes."

"It was so confoundedly common," went on Mr. Driscoll drearily, "so confoundedly common: her bribing the servants to lie to Dick—her keeping

his presents to her—her grabbing the money the way she did. Yes, my dear Emily, let us thank God we are gentle-folk! Well, as to Dick's theories, I suppose we must leave them alone. He's a strong man, and they tell me he's a good doctor. Decidedly, let us leave his theories in peace until something occurs to upset them. Dear old Dick!"

Emily rose, and walked over to the window again. She turned back to Mr. Driscoll and spoke, after a moment, with a rather forced spirit.

"Of course," she said gaily, "every-one, more or less, is in love with him. Lovely ladies congregate about him, in the hotel hall, in the evening, when he goes there to look after his patients. Then they haunt the lane here, whenever he is in the garden, and blessed be the one with whom he chats over the front fence."

"It hasn't so much been women that I feared for Dick, as success," remarked Mr. Casimir thoughtfully.

"Ah, yes. But Dick was clever enough to stand criticism; and he is even clever enough to stand praise."

There was silence for a moment.

"Aunt Adelaide has taken it wonderfully," Emily went on. "Instead of wincing at the thought of her relative's name on a front gate, she looks upon him as an insane but harmless freak."

"Your Aunt Adelaide is a dear, good woman," said Mr. Driscoll tartly. "But I shouldn't like to count the times I've nearly killed her. And other people—what do they think?"

"I remember your once saying that at one time in one's life people know one; and at another time in one's life people know who one is."

"Yes," said Mr. Casimir, "I see. Socially—horrible word!—I suppose he is—well, *vide* Aunt Adelaide. Whereas vulgarly, I suppose he is almost famous."

"I tell him that if he weren't good-looking, no one would be interested in his troubles. But he isn't easy to talk to just now, Mr. Casimir. He's like a smooth, hard wall, from which every-

thing rebounds. I tell you frankly that I'm sometimes afraid of him."

Mr. Driscoll leaned forward, took Emily's chin in his hand, and twisted her face toward him.

"And you," he said, smiling. "What's happened to you? You're almost natural!"

XII

"Oh, my dear man," said Mrs. Blair plaintively, struggling with an impulse to gasp for breath and rocking herself to and fro on Dick's piazza, "he actually calls dinner 'supper'! Only he still goes to his old tailor, and has his clothes sent from New York."

"I see. All is not lost, then," returned Mr. Driscoll pensively.

He was balancing himself carefully on the railing of the piazza. Mrs. Blair and Emily had just arrived for dinner; and they were waiting for Dick, who had been called out suddenly half an hour before.

In the lovely, late Southern twilight Emily was strolling to and fro on the brick path, watching the gate. Mr. Casimir was watching her. Somehow, he had never noticed Emily as he noticed her this evening. The delicate, frail grace of her long throat, the poise of her small dark head, the inimitable daintiness of her soft white dress, and her slender, sensitive hands holding a little lace scarf about her shoulders, struck him with a sense of complete satisfaction. What had happened to her? She had suddenly become another person. She was no longer an ornament, she was simply a woman.

He turned to Mrs. Blair with an effort.

"Yes, one's relations are very trying," he responded. "My aunt was."

Mrs. Blair sighed. "Of course, it's dreadfully smart to be here in winter. But summer—fancy, my dear Mr. Driscoll, the place quite deserted and the hotel closed! Oh, yes, it has really been a frightful grief to me. I never understood the whole business, from start to finish. That sudden and

violent separation, without a word to anyone—and yet without any special reason, so far as I could see, though everyone talked of Larry Wharncliffe——"

"Really?" interpolated Mr. Driscoll gravely.

"Oh, dear, yes! But nothing came of it. People say she's gone downhill steadily, and is quite impossible. Milly Carstairs met her in the lift at Worth's once, and was really embarrassed at bowing to her. Then that mad trip West, to look after those miners—and they say they're really horrible people—and his falling ill, and everything. Wasn't it too awful? I do think that the smallpox should have been a lesson to Dick; but he doesn't seem to have taken it that way. You can imagine my feelings when Emily insisted on dashing out there to nurse him. It was really dreadfully trying. I was left all alone, and I had just begun my music on Sunday afternoons. And it was so senseless. Why on earth didn't they get a trained nurse?"

"It was certainly extraordinary that Mr. Gibbs didn't think of it." If Emily had been near enough Mr. Driscoll was morally certain that, vulgarity or no vulgarity, he would have winked at her.

"Yes. Dear me, what a creature Mr. Gibbs was! He always reminded me of our under-gardener at Newport. I think they must have been distant cousins. Emily adored him. But then Emily adores the queerest people!"

Emily caught what her aunt was saying. She came to the edge of the piazza, and reached up and slipped her hand into Mr. Driscoll's.

"I adore *you*!" she laughed. Her eyes were still on the gate.

"But, my dear Mr. Driscoll, have you seen—*Gussie*? Well, really—of course, I suppose we must put up with it, but she is almost unbearable. Emily got to know her in a queer society or something, where she used to go on Tuesday nights, to cook and sing hymns with the girls. She started *Gussie* on her career. I'm sure I wish she hadn't. Her manners are—oh,

they're awful! And she looks at you as if she could see through to the back of your head and out the other side. She's so hopelessly common. Why, only tonight, when I was dressing for dinner, I found on my table a book which she had evidently left there——"

"Was it called 'No Wedding Bells for Her,' by Violetta St. Clair?" called Emily. "Yes, I know it. Don't blame her, Aunt Adelaide. Violetta St. Clair is a sort of moral, church-sociable, third-class Gyp."

"I really cannot imagine," continued Mrs. Blair tragically, "how such a person as Gussie came to exist in New York. But people who go in for all those church clubs and things tell me she is quite a type. I belonged to something of that sort once myself. Milly Carstairs got it up. It was called the Church Society, and Emily named it the Society Church; it was really fearfully smart, Emily, do you remember? The object was to give clothes and medicines to the poor. I used to send them all my old ball gowns. I had to resign; but I'm sure I hope it succeeded."

"Gussie's tastes are, I acknowledge, peculiar," said Emily, smiling, and pausing in her walk at the foot of the steps. "She and her friend, Mrs. Steinberg, are a source of continual joy to me. She took Gussie to a play, just before we came South. It was called 'Our Minnie; or, The Maid of the Bronx.' I asked Gussie what she thought of it, and she answered that it was a bum show—and then corrected herself and said it was an uninteresting performance. Minnie, it appears, smote the heart of what Gussie calls 'a real swell,' as she was crossing Fifth avenue, and the complications that ensued were many. It ended in the death of the real swell on the express-train track of the Subway, and our Minnie's marriage to a young man who worked in a drug-store."

"How neat!" said Mr. Driscoll amusedly.

"Yes. Gussie's shows, bum or not, always end in a judicious mixture of blood and joy. And she always goes

back to her Bowery vocabulary, in speaking of them. Once, when I asked her where she got tickets for something or other she said she had swiped them off her sister Etta. The stage seems to intoxicate her. She told me only the other day that if she hadn't gone into heads she would have tried the stage. She calls acting 'doing a turn on the legit.'"

Mrs. Blair sighed again. She had a habit of appearing cumbersomely tragic. "Oh, well, poor child, perhaps she didn't have any nice father or mother or anything, don't you know. I think it's dreadfully handicapping, that sort of thing."

Mr. Driscoll's eyes twinkled.

"Perhaps she was born in Brooklyn!"

"Yes, perhaps she was. Isn't it funny how one lives so near Brooklyn, and yet——"

"And yet one seldom crosses the bridge," interrupted Emily. "One never goes to Brooklyn except for Brooklyn. No, my dear Aunt Adelaide, Gussie's is a type peculiarly New York's. She is the essence of East Fourteenth street, West Twenty-third street and Broadway on a Saturday afternoon."

Mr. Driscoll burst out laughing. "You are much funnier than you used to be, Emily," he said. "And for the simple reason that you are less smart. You used to be a variegated chrysanthemum; you are now a common garden plant."

"She is much better looking than she used to be," observed Mrs. Blair musingly, looking after Emily as she strolled along the walk. "She curls her hair less; and she has changed her dressmaker."

"Ah!" said Mr. Casimir, smiling, "that must be it. I see!"

"Here is Dick!" called Emily suddenly; and she disappeared down the garden path.

Mrs. Blair rose ponderously.

"Do come down to the gate and see Dick's horses, Mr. Driscoll. I gave them to him for Christmas last year. I got them at the Horse Show."

Mr. Driscoll grunted.

"I hate horses," he said gruffly. "Let us rather go into the house and see what I brought Emily from Paris. I want to know if you approve of it."

Emily leaned on the gate, and watched Dick get out of his trap. He spoke a few words to the negro boy with him, patted the horses, and turned toward her.

"Whew, I'm tired!" he said. "How are you, Emily? Had a good day?"

She nodded and watched the boy lead the horses toward the stable entrance. She and Dick seemed to avoid looking at each other.

Dick, still on the other side of the gate, laid his hand on hers, as it rested on the bars.

"What am I to do when you're not here to meet me?" he asked in a low voice.

"My dear Dick, you will probably do very well indeed. Come in!"

He gave a little sigh, and opened the gate and walked up the path by her side. He had taken off his hat, and was running his fingers through his hair, with a habit which had clung to him from boyhood.

The merest glance at him, in the gathering twilight, showed one predominant thing; he had worked. His face was bronzed and weather-beaten, there were strong lines in his forehead, his mouth was stern and determined. A few ugly scars marked his terrible illness of six years ago. Somehow, they lent to his interest.

Emily glanced at him.

"Your hair is growing white on your temples, Richard!"

"I know," said Dick gloomily. "I am thinking of dyeing it; but I can't wipe out the lines, I suppose. Emily, Emily, look at the hyacinths! Who fixed them? You? Of course! Doesn't Mr. Driscoll think the garden lovely? Ah, me, it's good to get home!"

Emily laid her hand on his arm. "Listen, Dick; you mustn't get as tired as this. You'll overdo things, and break down. You can't work even a

machine more than a certain amount. Mark my words, you'll break down!"

Dick shrugged his shoulders. "Does it matter?"

"Yes, it does."

Something in her tone made him turn and look at her. He did not speak for a moment; then,

"Do you mean that?" he asked slowly.

She met his eyes for a moment. Then she winced and looked away.

"Naturally I mean it," she said lightly. "Go and dress—and hurry. Aunt Adelaide's starving."

After dinner, to everyone's satisfaction, Mrs. Blair went to sleep. When she was safely buried in slumber Dick beckoned the way into his office, and Mr. Driscoll and Emily tiptoed after him. They lit a small fire, for the evenings were apt to be chilly, and the three gathered around the blaze—Mr. Driscoll in the centre, Dick and Emily on either side of him.

They were silent for some time, each busily thinking. Then the old gentleman reached out his hand and patted Emily's arm.

"My dear children," he said, "I am really content. Happiness is not for one with a damaged digestion; but so far as content is possible, it is mine to-night. Your cook is admirable, Dick; Emily is—lovely; and a merciful Providence has seen fit to put Aunt Adelaide to sleep."

"The three years that you were away were very long, Mr. Casimir," said Emily thoughtfully. "It was something gone out of one's life. Ah, yes, I shall always hate that aunt."

Mr. Casimir blinked like a large, comfortable cat.

"I have often wondered why those years were canceled for me; I mean, so far as any pleasure goes. Here I am, ambling peacefully downhill toward my grave, with only a short space left me in which to eat, drink and be merry; and fate suddenly packs me off to a foreign shore, where club there is none, and keeps me, dieting by a deathbed, for thirty-six solid months. When one

is nearly seventy-one years old, dear children, thirty-six months count."

"I wonder if I shall end up like you!" said Dick, smiling, and knocking the ash from his cigar.

"No, my dear boy, you won't. If you die soon, you'll explode, from pure spontaneous energy. You have not yet given in to life, you see. That is my pet division: those who try to manage the world, and those who are—and much more comfortably—subservient to it."

"It is a difference of nature," put in Emily.

The old gentleman shook his head.

"Nature has something to do with it, but not much. It is mainly the result, that acquiescence, of having been buffeted until one is tired. Go with the stream more, Dick. You won't find the friction nearly so great."

Dick's eyes darkened and his mouth set.

"I have got to live my life in my own way, Mr. Casimir," he said simply. "Only you and Emily know how hard it was, at one time, for me to live at all. I managed to go on, because I hadn't really lived before. I had no life worth speaking of behind me, so I had nothing to regret. I—oh, well, it doesn't matter, anyway."

"You will not open the door, will you?" remarked Mr. Casimir quizzically. "Well, keep us outside—keep us outside. What is that forbidding-looking book, Emily?"

Emily made a little face.

"'Crawford's Dictionary of Diseases of the Ear.' I've been looking up some things in it for one of Dick's lectures in Augusta next month. By the way, Dick, your letters are typewritten, if you will look over them and sign them; and I sent the list of new instruments to New York this morning."

"I will do the letters when I come in tonight. Thanks, Emily."

"Then about the garden. I am thinning out the balsams and scattering them in the long beds by the fence. I can move some jonquils, too, if you think I'd better. It is glorious fun,

gardening, Mr. Casimir. You might help me with it some morning."

"With my back? My dear Emily!"

"Well, you can sit on the piazza and tell me how begrimed I am getting, then. When I first began to do it, I used to work in one of my most elaborate French dresses, with gloves on. But Dick came out one day and laughed at me so immoderately that I have since resorted to a checked apron. I bury myself in the soil every morning, and my hands are ruined forever."

Dick was leaning against the mantelpiece looking at her smilingly. She glanced up at him and held out her hands.

"Look!" she said.

He caught her hands in his and held them close. His eyes had softened wonderfully in the last moment.

"Isn't she a trump, Mr. Casimir?" he said, a little brokenly.

Mr. Driscoll cleared his throat loudly. "How surprisingly original! I discovered Emily long before you did."

"But I've known her since she was a baby."

"No, you haven't," retorted Mr. Driscoll curtly. "You've known her only since—well, since a very few years."

Dick turned away and did not answer.

Emily leaned back in her chair again. Her face was set and grave.

"Don't discuss me," she said. "Leave me and my sins alone. But—before you go out, Dick—we have got to discuss something else. I'm sorry—but we *must* discuss it."

Mr. Driscoll's attitude suddenly changed. He understood what was coming. He glanced sharply at Dick, and saw him square his shoulders.

"This evening," continued Emily, in her low, quiet voice, "just as we left the hotel, I got the night mail from the North. In it was a letter from—Pinkie."

She paused for a moment and looked at Mr. Driscoll. He was motionless.

"She arrived in this country some two weeks ago. She came over to see

about some business. She is going back to Europe on the tenth—on Wednesday, that is; and she wants to see me before she sails."

Still there was silence in the room. Emily raised her hand to her forehead a little nervously.

"It is very extraordinary that she should turn to me, after all this time," she said; "but, of course, I shall go. I shall have to start early tomorrow morning in order to get there in time."

Mr. Driscoll brought his clenched fist down on the arm of his chair. Then he swore under his breath.

"What do you owe Pinkie?" he asked angrily.

Emily was growing paler every moment.

"I can tell her whatever Dick wants me to; but I must certainly go."

Dick turned his back on them, and looked into the fire. His voice was very tired as he spoke.

"There is nothing to tell her—from me," he said. "When she left me she left me forever. If she dragged herself on her knees, from New York here, I wouldn't take her back. And I don't believe she'd ever want to come. She has lived on my money and she has had the benefit of my name. Emily gave her every chance to start decently—she insured her leaving me without scandal—she lied consistently, to save her. The result has been——"

Emily rose suddenly and laid her hand over his mouth.

"Stop, Dick," she said.

Dick covered his eyes with his hand for a moment. "You're right, Emily. I'm ashamed of myself. Yes, I suppose I oughtn't to rail at her now." He drew himself up again. "But understand this: I send her no message, I send her no word whatever. I never want to hear from her, I never want to hear of her. If she should come to my house I will refuse to see her. If she writes to me, I will return the letter unopened. She is just as dead to me as if she had died six years ago."

There was stillness for a moment. Then Emily took up her cloak from the sofa.

"Good night," she said. "I must wake Aunt Adelaide and take her home. I—I shall leave for New York by the morning train. I shall not see either of you again."

Mr. Driscoll sat upright in his chair.

"Stop one moment, Emily. What possible good can you do if you go? Forgive me, Dick—I know this is painful, but we must be frank. Pinkie is too far downhill for you to haul her up, Emily. She has canceled the duty of Dick's family to her. She has more than canceled Dick's duty to her. She has a father and she has a brother: let them manage things for her. Your impulse, my dear child, is generous; but it is also quixotic. You will only irritate her and harrow yourself; and you will spend two God-forsaken nights in a sleeping-car."

"Yes, I don't see what good you can possibly do, Emily," said Dick, leaning over the back of Mr. Driscoll's chair and facing his cousin. "What on earth she can want with you I don't understand. She is"—he laughed disagreeably—"she is hardly fool enough to suppose she can get more money out of me. Why do you go?"

Emily was standing motionless, her hands clasped in front of her. She shook her head sadly.

"I am sorry, but I must go, Dick. It isn't as your cousin that I can do anything for her, but as her friend. If she wants to pull up—if she wants to steady herself—I may give her a helping hand in some way. I should be"—she raised her head suddenly—"I should be the most despicable of women if I didn't go. Well, good night—and good-bye. I shall be back on Thursday. Forgive me, both of you, please—but I must go."

They bade her good night; and a few minutes later she and Mrs. Blair drove off.

Mr. Driscoll and Dick lingered on the piazza for a moment, looking up at the stars. A clear crescent moon hung over the garden, and the heavy scent of the lilacs blew gently to them through the night. Mr. Driscoll took his cigar from his mouth and sighed.

"Women are damned queer!" he ejaculated.

Dick nodded. "Yes."

"Do you know the real reason that Emily is going North, my friend? She is going because she thinks she is wronging Pinkie by——"

Dick caught his arm suddenly.

"Don't, Mr. Driscoll," he said hoarsely. "I must be off. Make yourself comfortable. Good night."

XIII

THE following day, with Emily gone and Dick at Augusta giving a lecture, Mr. Casimir knocked about the house in relentless loneliness. He had an attack of Emily's old disease—mental indigestion. He tried reading, but he could not concentrate. He tried writing letters, and ended by abusing himself for not having written them before. He tried smoking in the sun and doing nothing; but the remembrance of Dick's face, the night before, came between him and the summer sky. After gravely considering whether or not he were mad, he determined to garden.

Emily had shown him several beds which needed weeding—for, like all true gardeners, it was her pride that no alien hands should touch her flowers—and had laughingly set him a task. The old gentleman took off his coat, pinned a large white towel around his portly person, rolled up his sleeves and set to work.

It was really delightful, digging in the warm, fine soil with a comfortable sun on one's back. Soon Mr. Casimir was on his knees on the ground, careless of his immaculate trousers, and as interested in his labors as if he were a boy. The afternoon came to its height of glory. Every now and then he mopped his forehead carefully with his handkerchief, and then toiled on, oblivious of everything.

A sudden step beside him on the grass made him glance around sharply. He was on all fours, bending over a clump of particularly obstinate weeds, his hands a mass of brown clay; and

there before him, placidly chewing tobacco, his keen blue eyes twinkling with amusement, stood Mr. Elias F. Gibbs.

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Driscoll weakly. "How on earth did you come here? Who sent you? Who told you where I was? If you will give an older man than you a lift up, I will wash my hands at that spigot. There, there, there! How do you do, sir? I'm glad to see you."

Gibbs shook hands. "Don't you wash off that sort of dirt for me, Mr. Driscoll. You forget I've dug in bigger things than gardens in my life. How are you? I don't think I've ever seen you so near to having a good time before!"

Mr. Casimir grasped his arm.

"Do you see that place by the rose-bush?" he said eagerly. "Well, I've weeded every inch, from there here—every inch of it! What do you think of that, sir?"

"I think it was powerful slow!" said Gibbs solemnly. "What kind of a shovel have you got? Oh, a *trowel*, I see. It's no good, that. Now, if you'll let me get that there hoe behind the stoop and break up the ground for you, you can chop it fine with the trowel after me, and we'll do twice the work in half the time. And we can talk, too."

Mr. Driscoll beamed. He watched Gibbs with an almost envious admiration as the latter took off his coat and prepared to work. There was something neat and quick and cat-like in the man's movements. He touched things firmly; he measured things carefully. Mr. Driscoll sank contentedly to his knees again, and chopped diligently at the soil which Gibbs hoed up. They were both as immensely interested in weeding a garden-bed as if one of them had not been a multi-millionaire and the other a member of the Union Club.

"You see," said Gibbs confidentially, as they plodded along, looking down at Mr. Driscoll's broad back, "it takes a man who's worked to know how to work. I always think it's the one experience you can't unlearn. Look at

us, now. You're a smarter man than me; but I could dig all around you."

"Yes," gasped Mr. Driscoll; "but I did a good deal alone, you know. Now, tell me"—he paused for a moment and raised himself upright—"tell me what on earth brought you here?"

Gibbs leaned on his hoe. "Well, Mr. Driscoll, Miss Emily Blair brought me here. I was in New York till day before yesterday; I went there to see my daughter. I—Pinkie, you know. She's there."

"Yes. I know."

"How do you know?" asked Gibbs, raising his eyebrows.

Mr. Casimir smiled.

"Why, your daughter wrote Emily that she was in New York, and going to be there until the tenth. She—expressed a wish to see Emily."

"And Emily went?"

"Yes," said Mr. Driscoll. "Emily went. She went this morning."

Gibbs spat some tobacco on the grass. "Women beat me!" he remarked.

"Exactly my feelings, my dear sir. Well, you've missed her. It's too bad."

"I guess you'll do as well, for that matter," said Gibbs slowly. "Maybe you'll do better. But—I didn't know Pinkie'd written for her, Mr. Driscoll. I wouldn't have stood for that. Pinkie's got no call on any of you, now."

Mr. Casimir shrugged his shoulders and did not answer.

"What I say is," continued Gibbs, "treat people straight and they'll treat you straight; or, if they don't they ain't worth treating at all. Poor little Pinkie! I set powerful store on her. But she slumped—I'm afraid she slumped. She can always come back to me when she wants; but she didn't act like Mary's child ought to. She wouldn't have stood for what Pinkie's done, Mary wouldn't. She wasn't that kind, my wife." He turned suddenly and began to hoe again. "Well, I've had it in my mind for some months to have a talk with Miss Blair. I don't often leave the Tea Cup—since I went

back six years ago, you know—and Harry's living in Cleveland. He just about leads Cleveland, Harry does. Then, some two weeks ago, I got this letter from Pinkie, saying she was coming to this country on business, and would I come on to New York and meet her. So I came, and spent five days with her. She didn't seem to want me to stay and see her off on the tenth, because Harry's going to be with her, and I guess she's got too independent to like much family around."

"By the way," said Mr. Driscoll curiously, "you say business brought her here. Now, *what* business, I wonder?"

"I don't know. I guess it was money. Pinkie looks after her own affairs, she does. Well, I didn't want to go West right away, because they're whitewashing my kitchen in Gibbsville, so I got my car hooked on to a train and came South. As I say, I've wanted to see Miss Blair for some time, and I heard she was here; and I thought I'd push on to Palm Beach."

He paused and looked around him wonderingly.

"So this is where Faxon lives?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's all of it too much for me. I hear great things about him, though. They say he's a tip-top man all round. Out my way they think the earth isn't big enough to hold him. He acted fine that time, Mr. Driscoll, he acted fine. And she——"

"Ah, *she!*" said old Mr. Casimir.

Gibbs suddenly flung down his hoe.

"By Jove, I've never seen anything like her spunk! I don't believe another woman in ten thousand could have done what she did. It was big, that's what it was; it was big work. Yes, some day I want to see Miss Emily Blair again."

"Dick's in Augusta," said Mr. Casimir. He had found a piece of hose and was attaching it to the spigot, puffing heavily meanwhile. "He's lecturing there. He'll be rather cut up if you leave without seeing him, I think."

Gibbs picked up his hoe, and fell to work again.

"No, I'll get along tonight, I reckon.

Somehow, I—I'd rather wait and see him with her. I'll be somewhere round here next year. Yes, I'd rather wait and see him when I see her. They always seem to go together."

"I know what you mean. They suit each other. There! thank the Lord! Do you"—Mr. Casimir looked wistfully at the hose he held; he reminded one strongly of a small child at a party, reluctantly giving up his ice cream to a guest—"do you want to play the hose, or shall I?"

"You'd better let me," said Gibbs. "You might swamp all the stuff."

Mr. Driscoll sighed. He sat down in a wheelbarrow which was standing beside them, and began to scrape the dirt off his trowel with a stick. "Well, you say I will do as well as Emily—"

Gibbs nodded. "I guess so. I've got to leave tonight, you see. I made all the arrangements with the train people. I—what I want to say is just this, Mr. Driscoll." He turned to the old gentleman, and faced him. "You know Miss Blair better than anyone, and your telling her this, from me, will, perhaps, mean more than if I told her direct. I'm not a good hand at putting things delicate. And I've got something pretty delicate to say, to start with. I—I've sort of wondered, from what I've heard and from what I've seen, if she and Faxon weren't in love with each other."

Mr. Casimir dusted his hands with his handkerchief. He had a great faculty, in the big moments of life, of doing things calmly.

"You are right," he said deliberately.

"Well, I don't want anyone to think that I'm shoving my oar in where I'm not wanted. I haven't counted in this game, from the very start. But I'm Pinkie's father, Mr. Driscoll, and I tell you straight that the best thing Dick can do is to get a divorce and marry Miss Emily Blair."

"You are a generous man, sir," said Mr. Driscoll gently.

"No, I'm not. It isn't my part that counts. I don't understand all this here talk of Faxon's about no divorce

and that sort of thing. But what I say is this: the person that matters more than anyone else in this show is Miss Blair, and she ought to get her happiness if she can."

Mr. Casimir shook his head, and, turning to the spigot, he began to wash his hands carefully. "That's all very well, my dear sir, and I think the very fineness of your attitude will influence them both. But I strongly doubt whether Dick ever breaks."

"Breaks? Why, it isn't a question of breaking. It's just plain mulish obstinacy. Dick is sacrificing a woman's happiness to a lot of vague ideas. I don't know what you call it, but I call it confounded rot."

Mr. Driscoll was thoughtful for a moment. In later years his next words often came back to him.

"My dear Mr. Gibbs, you are right. For me, and, perhaps, for you, it *would* be confounded rot. But just as we need all sorts and kinds of people in this world, so do we also need that type which does a good thing well, without bothering about the motive behind it. Dick's position has made him strong; and, cynic that I am, I can vaguely understand that his abandoning that position would make him a cad." He turned and laid his hand on Gibbs's shoulder. "It was fine of you to come, and fine of you to say what you have said. You have been fine all through."

"Well, I know a good sort when I see it. Just you tell them what I think. And now let's get on with this here work."

They toiled on for an hour or more, chatting about Emily, the garden and the growing magnificence of Gibbsville. Then, just as the sun set, Gibbs laid down his tools, put on his coat and said good-bye.

"My car gets shunted along the line at 7.14," he said. "I'll have to hustle. Well, tell them both, those two, what I've said to you. I'm sorry not to see her, but I'll try again next year. And as for you, sir, if you'll come to Gibbsville, I'll see that you ain't neglected."

Mr. Driscoll shook hands. "Good-bye. Good luck to you. I have arrived

at the stage of life where one never plans ahead; but if I have—time, Mr. Gibbs, I shall come to Gibbsville."

"Do you want to die?" asked Gibbs, his sharp eyes smiling.

"No. Yet I remember Emily once saying to me that good possibilities were better than poor facts. I have been a poor fact. Some centuries hence you may be surprised to meet me as a good possibility. Until then, my club is good enough for me." He paused. "But there's one thing more I want to say to you. You took my rightful place with those two out in Montana. You oversaw them, so to speak. I'm glad you did. You did a damned sight better than I could have done."

Gibbs laughed. "Well, you're on hand now, you see. Maybe you'll get some chance to work it out to the end for them."

"Yes," said Mr. Driscoll half sadly. "That is what I am always hoping."

They had strolled to the gate, and, for the last time, Gibbs paused. He looked at the house and then at Mr. Driscoll.

"That's about the size of it for them, I guess. They're the kind that would miss the poor fact for the good possibility. Whatever comes, they've played the game straight—they've played the game straight."

"It is a big question, the winning or losing of the game," observed Mr. Casimir.

"Yes. And yet I guess we haven't got the least idea of scoring it, after all."

Gibbs started on his way. Mr. Driscoll leaned on the gate, watching him. His eyes were very kindly, and he was smiling. Something in their very difference seemed to draw them close.

A little way down the road Gibbs paused. He called back genially.

"Do you like tobacco?" he shouted.

Mr. Driscoll nodded furiously.

"Well, I'll send you some. I guess we'll agree as to kind. You smoke and I chew, but I guess we both know a good sort when we see it."

That evening Mr. Casimir had a long talk with Dick. In some curious way it reminded him of a former talk they had had, years ago. It seemed to be, invariably, uphill work to urge Dick. He had that quiet, self-contained faculty of strong people which prevented his making up his mind until he was sure of it, and then made it equally difficult for him to unmake it.

Mr. Casimir opened fire by an account of Gibbs's visit, judiciously mingled with some of his own observations. Dick was silent for some time; then, with a dignity and a simplicity which became him well, he acknowledged he was in love with Emily Blair.

"I love her, and I want her more than all the rest of the world put together," he said. "And I can't have her."

"Well," sighed the old gentleman, taking a long draft of the invariable whisky-and-soda beside him, "you may make mistakes, my dear boy, but they will always be strong mistakes."

Dick was silent for some minutes. Then he took a time-table from his pocket.

"I wonder what time she will get in on Thursday!" he said restlessly.

Mr. Casimir winced. He glanced sharply at Dick as he spoke. "If I were you, I shouldn't set too much store on Emily's coming back just now. She told me nothing, remember; but I shouldn't be at all surprised if she lingered in New York for a little. Aunt Adelaide wants to go off to Palm Beach next week, at any rate, and she couldn't have Emily alone at the hotel here. No, Dick, don't be surprised if Emily doesn't come back just now."

As they were going up to bed, Dick spoke again.

"It has all taken so long!" he said sadly.

"Yes, my dear boy. But those things which count are the growth of years. Let God take His own time, Dick; and bring up the whisky with you, please."

XIV

THE old gentleman proved right. The days passed, and Emily did not come back.

She wrote to Mr. Casimir a full account of her interview with Pinkie. It had been very short and concise. She had stayed only some ten minutes. Pinkie had had on a pink chiffon dress—at 11 A.M.—and looked badly; looked, Emily thought, almost ill. She had been hard and bright and distant, inquiring politely for Mrs. Blair and Mr. Driscoll; and her only obvious errand had been to ask Emily the address of a certain dressmaker in Paris.

"But the more I think over it," Emily wrote, "the more I am convinced that she wanted something. She is lonely, she looks ill, and she is evidently bored by the paths she has been treading. In fact, in spite of the pink chiffon, she struck me as rather dragged, and, for the first time in her life, as a little pathetic. Briefly, I dare say she would be glad to pull up. She knows that Dick is unyielding and she knows that New York has forgotten her. My visit evidently discouraged her—I wore black, and felt like carrying a prayer-book—and she said she was glad she was off to Europe again. I cannot help it, Mr. Casimir; I feel sorry for her."

"Minx!" muttered Mr. Driscoll angrily.

The weeks began to slip by. Dick worked on, busier than ever, with a new look of sadness about his eyes and a new set of dogged determination to his mouth. He spoke seldom of Emily, never of himself. The gates were closed again; that was all.

Mr. Driscoll dozed in the sun, and feebly tried to garden. He came to the conclusion that, in the latter occupation, Gibbs was too good for him. He had written Emily of his interview with that gentleman, and, beyond a word of thanks; she had not answered the letter.

A rainy spell befell them in late March, and Mr. Casimir, after groaning

for several days, went to bed with the gout. Dick shook his head, and called in a famous doctor from Columbia. Between them they decided that the old gentleman must take a cure.

"Oh, my dear boy!" said Mr. Casimir piteously. "Abroad again, and at my age! How can I? You are trying to hurry me to my grave, Dick. You know the contents of my will."

So Mr. Driscoll resigned himself, and, being a wise person, he wrote Emily that Dick's cook made bad beef tea, and was she not coming South soon. But Emily proved adamant.

"I cannot come now," she wrote him. "Beef tea or no beef tea, I must stay here. But my plans are beginning to form themselves. Aunt Adelaide reaches New York this week, and I shall gently break the news to her that Newport next summer is not for me. I am going to take the housekeeper as companion, and go South and West. I want to see New Orleans; I want to see the Rockies, and I want to see Gibbsville again. I have outgrown Newport; or, I suppose I ought to say, Newport has outgrown me.

"Therefore, dear Mr. Driscoll, Gus-sie and I will not turn up again, *chez vous*, until some time in early May. I am arranging to make my headquarters with Mrs. Oliver, who lives near Dick. I shall stay for one week and pick up my traps; and then, the housekeeper and a private car, the gift of a railroad man who was once in love with me, having joined me, I shall start on my travels. They will take me first to New Orleans; and from there on, wherever the spirit moves me, until, some time in the late summer, I see Gibbsville.

"Oh, my dear friend, doesn't it seem tragic that he cares, and that I care, and that we haven't been free to say the simplest little word of the truth to each other? Doesn't it seem tragic that, when he *could*, he didn't? . . . I know you will scold me for croaking, and, indeed, I will not croak any more. Only it is difficult to go on such tiny things—to be near him only through his house, his flowers and

his typewriter. It is possible, but it is difficult. By the way, I hope you will remind Sarah to have veal cutlets for his dinner every now and then. He likes them."

She came back to them just as May dawned. For days beforehand there was festival in the little house. Mr. Casimir straightened the books on Dick's table with grave care, and placed clumsy bunches of flowers methodically around the rooms. Dick seemed nervous, and was at home very little.

It is borne in upon us sometimes in our lives that the elasticity of such a little thing as a week is pitiful. The afternoon of the last day came. Emily was to leave that night at ten o'clock. She had lunched with some friends, and in the early afternoon she walked down to Dick's garden, to sit in it for the last time, alone. She was to dine with Dick and Mr. Casimir that evening, and to go to the train from there.

Of all the long, lovely week this last was the loveliest day—a clear, soft, sunshiny Southern day, such as only the combination of early May and the South can produce. Emily opened the little gate, passed into the garden, and drew in her breath with a great sigh of delight. Everywhere—up the sides of the house, over the hedge, on the trellises, and crowding the flower-beds—there were roses. Roses, roses, roses; such a wealth, such a riot of them that one was fairly dizzy with their beauty. Every bush was out, every blossom seemed to have burst in time to bid her good-bye.

Then, suddenly, on the little brick path before her, she saw Dick. He was watching her gravely, yet half smiling at her evident pleasure.

Emily grew a little pale. "You here!" she said. "What is happening to patients and office-hours? Where is Mr. Casimir?"

"I'm taking a holiday this afternoon. I've been waiting here, hoping you'd come, Emily. Mr. Casimir has gone to drive."

They strolled along, side by side,

deeper and deeper into the garden. Emily sat down on a little bench under a climbing *Maréchal Niel*, and looked up at the sky. The sun was in her eyes and on her hair.

Dick, after hesitating a moment, seated himself beside her. He bent forward, his elbows on his knees, his chin in his hands. His strong, clean-cut, rather hard face was turned from Emily. He was a wonderfully handsome man, his dark hair tinged with gray, his clear keen eyes, his smooth, almost stern face. Emily always felt a foolish little pride that he was so well over six feet, that his shoulders were so broad, and his hands so well shaped.

And through all the summer afternoon they sat there, side by side, neither speaking a word; for words were too little and what they could not say was too much. Emily's eyes grew dim with tears and then cleared again; a sob rushed into her throat and then died away. She was too happy to cry, and her unhappiness was too great for tears.

The light began to change about five o'clock. It grew more brilliant and more vivid. Dick stirred suddenly. The scent of the roses was almost overpowering.

He turned to Emily and smiled at her. It was the best moment of his life, and he knew it.

"I must go back to my work—dear," he said.

When Mr. Driscoll came in from his drive, about seven o'clock, he found Emily busily writing in Dick's office. She wore her traveling-dress and her hat was on the table beside her.

"There!" she said gaily. "You have come! Did you have a good drive, Mr. Casimir? I am clearing up my last odds and ends. My arrangements are all made, and you will be rid of me by half-past nine. Gussie will come here for me then."

"Are there to be no farewell groans at the station?" asked Mr. Driscoll gloomily, sinking into a chair.

"No, no. I shall say good-bye to you both here. I came without being met and I would rather go without be-

ing speeded. Please—*please*, Mr. Casimir! By the way, Dick has gone to Watch Hill. He started some two hours ago, but I'm afraid he'll be fearfully late for dinner."

"Probably."

"I do hope Sarah will attend to his meals properly this summer."

"Let us hope so."

Emily sighed. "I hate to think that you'll be going, too—in two little weeks!"

"And to Mont-Enard-les-Bains!" said Mr. Driscoll with concentrated disgust. "Oh, if I only live through it, my dear child! But at least it will be France and not Germany. Thank heaven for that. I hate Germans. They are a nation of pigs."

"I thought it was the English you called pigs?"

"No, my dear Emily, no. The English are hogs. Pigs are so much fatter and blonder. They are essentially German, pigs. I have invented a barnyard of nations, by the way. I am going to copyright it."

"Well, dear Mr. Casimir, you will write to me often, will you not? I shall be so hungry for news of you. Tell me how you are, about your cure, whom you meet, whom you make friends with, and whom you succeed in avoiding. Tell me everything."

Mr. Driscoll stood up suddenly and banged his fist on Dick's table.

"Well, go!" he said savagely. "You're a fool, and Dick's another. I always thought Pinkie ought to have been—chucked, and now I wish she had been. Little monkey! Do you suppose *she* would have blinked at your precious moral questions? Not much! She would have curled her hair and polished her finger-nails and done what she damn pleased!"

Emily gave a little shrug, walked over to the centre-table, and lit Dick's reading-lamp. She seated herself, straightened the papers in front of her, and dipped her pen in the ink.

Then she raised her head and looked at the old gentleman. There was a little smile mingled with the tears in her eyes.

"When you go out," she said, "would you mind banging the door? I think it will make you feel better."

Mr. Driscoll fidgeted all through dinner. He was cross and surly, a sure sign with him—as it is, indeed, with most people—that he was angry with himself. He abused the cook, he abused the butcher, he abused Emily, he abused Dick. When they adjourned to Dick's office he fell into a testy silence, and watched the clock with sly cunning.

At twenty-five minutes past nine Mr. Driscoll rose.

"I am stifling!" he said. "Horrible climate this! I shall go out on the piazza and watch for that lovely creature, Gussie. I will shout when she comes, Emily."

It was very dark on the piazza. A thunder-shower seemed to hang in the heavy, lifeless air, and not a star was out. As soon as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness Mr. Casimir made his way to the edge of the piazza and sat down on the top step. A tiny shaft of light, filtering through the closed shutters of Dick's office windows, fell on the watch which the old man held.

A footstep sounded suddenly on the path, and a moment later he made out Gussie, tiptoeing, and talking in a stage whisper.

"It's me—Gussie," she said. "Oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, dear! That it's come to this! And she so white and tired—Mr. Driscoll! Can you hear me? Do you think we could get the engineer to have a smash-up?"

"No, I don't," said Mr. Casimir angrily. "Be quiet, Gussie. Is the carriage there? Oh, yes; I see it. Now, remember——"

Gussie clasped her hands.

"And him loving her so!" she exclaimed tragically. "Oh, Mr. Driscoll, she'll never live through this summer. You'll see! I don't want to make you unhappy, but you'll see. Good heavens! what's that? It must be a skunk——"

Mr. Driscoll groaned. "I've got to call her in three-quarters of a minute!"

he said, his eyes glued to his watch. "Now, Gussie, remember that you're to cable me once a week how things are going. Don't cry—there's a good girl—don't cry! I'm going to call her now. Emily!"

They waited breathlessly for a moment. Then the door opened, and Emily and Dick came out.

The shaft of light from the open door lit their figures as they stood there—lit the misery of Dick's white face and the quivering of Emily's lips.

Emily stepped forward and silently kissed Mr. Driscoll.

"Good-bye, my dear child, good-bye," murmured old Mr. Casimir huskily; "don't get eaten up by bears."

Emily turned. With a smile and a little wave of her hand she followed Gussie down the steps, and went away into the night.

XV

MR. CASIMIR DRISCOLL was bored. His chair was uncomfortable, the band to which he was listening was execrable, and his letters had not been promptly forwarded from London. Worst of all, at a little iron table near him was seated a stout, placid man, several years his junior, who was drinking an excellent Burgundy.

Now Burgundy was forbidden fruit to Mr. Driscoll. His cure was accomplished, but he was still under the ban of diet, especially as to wines. He had been condemned to go, and he was to leave the following day, from Mont-Enard-les-Bains to Spiez, a little town in the far south of Germany, there to take that most unsatisfactory of all things, an after-cure. To sacrifice oneself to disgusting waters and mud-baths for a set purpose is difficult enough, but to be told to go on and, as it were, indorse the sacrifice, is indeed bitter.

Mr. Casimir had not totally hated Mont-Enard-les-Bains. For a month and a half he had faithfully done his duty, trying to pretend that he was a philosopher—to himself, that is;

for he was old enough to have given up pretending to other people. Mont-Enard was wonderfully pretty—a small, neat, quiet French spa, set among some rolling hills, with a delightful hotel and American newspapers frequently. Mr. Driscoll, in spite of his determination to be cross, had begun to enjoy himself. He had been very quiet, living a peaceful life, and thankful for the fine, warm weather. And now this horrible Marcillac had condemned him to go to Spiez.

He had argued despairingly for several days, and had then given his servant orders to pack. For the last time he had railed at the doctor for his lack of coherence; for the last time he had cursed after-cures; and now, for the last time, he was telling himself that Spiez was probably German for Long Branch. It sounded rich, and Mr. Casimir was sure it was vulgar. No more French dishes, no more French language, no more French people—and, in spite of his protestations, the old gentleman loved them—but German manners, German smells and a total inability to drink German beer!

In the gardens of the Hotel Victoria at Mont-Enard there were colored lanterns swung from tree to tree. Fat Cupids and overgrown rabbits, done in brilliantly colored plaster, sported in and out among the shrubbery. In the little kiosk the band, very much uniformed and very little trained, was grinding out the "Jewel Song" from "Faust." A week ago Mr. Driscoll would have stood by that band to a man. But this evening, his last at Mont-Enard, he called disconsolately to the doctor, who was strolling down the walk in front of him, and asked him to have *cette musique d'enfer* suppressed.

Dr. Marcillac, a small, dapper little man, with very round goggle eyes and a manner of such vivacity that one was in continual terror of his exploding, turned.

"Ah!" he said. "*Mon Dieu*, it is you! I thought you liked our music. Ah, *qu'il était un maître, ce Gounod!*"

Ainsi—you go tomorrow. What a pity!"

Mr. Driscoll pulled a chair beside his table, and motioned the doctor to a seat.

"It is your doing," he said crossly. "I am so comfortable here. How pretty the lanterns are at night!"

"An after-cure, *mon très cher Monsieur*, is needful. Keep a brave heart. *Du courage, mon ami, du courage! Voilà ce qu'il nous faut.* There is a merry-go-round in the Kursaal at Spiez."

"Ugh!" grunted Mr. Casimir.

The doctor spread out his hands regretfully.

"It is a pity you cannot stay," he said pensively. "Mimi will have her fête next week. *La Maman* and I had decided to have ices."

"Mimi?"

"Yes, our Mimi. She will have seven years."

Mr. Casimir sighed. "I particularly like Mimi. She is so—what shall I say?—Gallic."

"Gallic?" said the doctor vaguely.

"Yes."

"It is perhaps a medical term?"

"No. It is—it is a national classification."

There was silence for some moments.

"Ah—*mais ce sera joliel*!" said the little doctor suddenly. "Pink ices—*la glace rose, avec des marrons!* I wish you could wait."

"Well, my dear friend, you are the one who is packing me off. Do not allow your parental pride to interfere with— By Jove, who is that?"

Monsieur Marcillac twisted in his chair. "That?"

"The woman with the light hair, who just went into the hotel by the far door. She had on a blue dress."

"*Très bien mise, n'est-ce pas?* Oh, that is a countrywoman of yours. She arrived this morning. I have forgotten the name. Wait—so! I have it! Madame Richard Faxon."

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Casimir nervously. "Pinkiel!"

"That is it. Madame Richard Faxon, of New York. She comes"—he

leaned forward confidentially, and tapped the left side of his chest—"she comes for her heart. Schmidt, of Nauheim, sent her here. She is—ah, it is sad. Do not mention it, Monsieur Driscoll, do not mention it."

Mr. Casimir nodded thoughtfully.

"Is it really serious?"

"Well, with such cases one can never tell. It is not that she is ill all the time, but it is there, the trouble—ah, *mon cher Monsieur Casimir, il est là!* She may live forever, but some day she may be frightened—a fire, a runaway horse, an unexpected letter—and so—piff! She will go. *Dieu mon Père*, what a trouble, that of the heart!"

Mr. Casimir smiled. "I would give a handsome commission to the incendiary, the horse or the postman!" he said grimly. Then his face softened a little. "Poor little ass! That is what we call in English, dear *Monsieur le docteur*, the sword of Damocles."

"So, so! Well, I would rather die more gently. A nice quick pneumonia, now! That would be better."

"Possibly," observed Mr. Driscoll critically, "possibly. And is she—Madame Faxon—to stay here long?"

"Her cure will be a long one, yes. I examined her late this afternoon. Ah, yes, she must stay some time for any good to come of it."

"She probably takes her meals in her salon. I didn't see her at dinner."

The doctor raised his hands in mute ecstasy.

"*Mais—elle est riche, affreusement riche!*—so rich that it is marvelous. She has her apartments, her salon, her *courier*, her maid; she has engaged a private carriage, and she has already bespoken season tickets for the Casino. See what money will do! *Ainsi va le monde!*"

Mr. Driscoll nodded absently. He was busily thinking.

They watched the people strolling on the garden terrace for some moments. Then the doctor rose with a sigh.

"*Eh bien!*" he said mournfully. "If you must go! But Mimi will cry."

"And what shall I do? I have cried, dear doctor, until it is no more use. I am too old to be fussed over in this way, and distinctly not worth the trouble."

"I shall be at the station in the morning to bid you farewell. I shall bring Mimi. When she knows you are going she will gather a bunch of flowers from our garden—*quelque chose de superbe!* You will see. Ah, *mon Dieu*, what a child!"

"*Magnifique!*" said Mr. Driscoll gravely.

"*Oui, c'est vrai. C'est bien vrai. Elle est charmante; et c'est une âme si sérieuse! N'en doutez pas. Mais—que voulez vous? Je suis son père!*" And he trotted off, leaving Mr. Casimir smiling lazily.

The "Jewel Song" from "Faust" was giving way to a cornet solo by a misguided young man who had evidently mistaken his vocation. Mr. Driscoll relit his cigar, and composed himself to hope for better things.

"Pinkie!" he kept muttering to himself. "Poor little fool! I'm glad she didn't see me. Heart disease! How life evens up in the end!"

A second later, strolling rather listlessly along the path toward him, he saw Pinkie herself.

She had wandered out of the hotel, evidently quite aimlessly. It was evident, too, that she did not see Mr. Driscoll. The old gentleman considered for a moment. Flight was plainly out of the question: she was coming directly toward his table and could not possibly avoid seeing him; and a retreat on Mr. Casimir's part would only have been a marked rudeness.

He shrugged his shoulders resignedly, and, with a quizzical smile, he awaited the onslaught.

Pinkie caught sight of him some distance off. Mr. Driscoll, out of the corner of his eye, could see her fuss a little with her laces and obviously long for a mirror. Then she came forward.

"Why, Mr. Driscoll!" she said.

The old gentleman rose, with his courtly bow.

"My dear lady! Of all unexpected things!"

Pinkie shook hands, and sat down in the chair he offered her. She moved about restlessly until she had arranged herself so that the light from the swinging lanterns would not strike her face.

"Yes, this is really awfully queer. How on earth did you turn up here? How long are you going to stay?"

"Alas, I am off tomorrow!" said Mr. Casimir pleasantly. "And at an early hour at that. I have been here for the same reason that all other victims come. I have a broken old body, and they won't let me die in peace."

Pinkie glanced at him. He saw suddenly that her eyes had a wide-open, almost frightened expression. Her prettiness had degenerated, with her dyed hair, into an overdressed vulgarity. Her frock was too pronounced for refinement, and her diamonds were too large for truth. And she seemed distinctly too old for her years. Mr. Driscoll had expected her to look like a young woman with a past; instead of which she looked like a faded woman with a doubtful future.

"I know. It's perfectly dreadful, a cure, isn't it? I've got to take one, too. I've been rushing around Paris getting my gowns and I'm simply done up. I was home in February, you know."

"Yes."

"I saw Emily," went on Pinkie, drumming out a little tune with her fingers on the table. "She's simply great, Emily, isn't she?"

"Yes."

"But, dear me, home's pretty slow after Paris! I'm just crazy about Paris. I'm going to have an apartment there next winter. When I've finished here I'm going to take a house at Dinard for the rest of the summer."

"I should think Dinard would suit you exactly."

"Yes, I guess it will."

A stiff silence fell upon them.

"I saw your father shortly before I left America."

"Did you? He's got no use for anything but Gibbsville now. Harry's coming over here later in the summer."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Driscoll politely.

"Yes. He's engaged—to a girl who's an awful swell out there in Cleveland. Her name is Genevieve Webber—the packing-house Webbers, you know."

"I have eaten their tinned meats," said Mr. Casimir.

Pinkie fidgeted for a moment. She was evidently interested in what she was about to say, and she forgot to keep her face away from the light.

"How is everyone at home?" she asked suddenly.

Mr. Driscoll pondered. Then he resolved on a bold stroke.

"Dick is very well," he answered.

Pinkie winced.

"Is he? He seems to have become a great mogul down there in South Carolina."

"Yes. One might call him a great mogul, I suppose."

Pinkie laughed disagreeably. "When I saw Emily it was plain enough that she was still in love with him!" she remarked.

"Yes," said Mr. Casimir slowly, "yes. More so than ever. Almost as much in love with him as he—" Then, by some impulse for which he was grateful until he died, he stopped.

"Well," said Pinkie, "it's too bad. She ought to marry, Emily. She must be getting on. When I saw her I thought she'd lost a lot of her style. Gray hair is so dreadfully trying."

"Ah, well, my dear lady"—he would not call her by Dick's name—"we must all grow old, you know. Emily, as you say, ought to marry. She misses a great deal by not doing so."

Pinkie examined her finger-nails critically. "I didn't find marriage much of a success!"

"No. Very true. It is apt, I admit, to succeed only in two directions; either when both parties are complacently domestic, like cows, or when they understand each other's—shall we say vagaries?—and keep their mouths shut and their eyes open. I have always wanted to add this prayer

to the marriage service: 'O Lord, grant us mutual tolerance!'"

"There are other things in life as good as marriage," said Pinkie rather pertly.

"There are many things in life better than marriage; but there is nothing else exactly like it. It is, so to speak, an isolated experience. It has many and grave objections. But when one arrives at my time of life one realizes that it also has its advantages. Extremes grow too chilly, flights of fancy too unstable, irregularities too regular, and loneliness too lonely. Ah, no! ah, no! I often wish I had become a domestic cow!"

Pinkie looked him over thoughtfully.

"You know an awful lot!" she observed.

"On the contrary, I know very little. But, dear lady, I have watched a good deal. I have seen that, despite the attractive glamour of the world, it is almost always inseparable from—excuse me—the flesh and the devil. Generalities glitter, I grant you, and the home specific is likely to wear calico. It is apt to be trite, usually uninteresting, and always monotonous, the home specific. But, God knows, it is comfortable!"

"Comfort means a great deal."

"Comfort means everything," retorted Mr. Casimir solemnly; "especially when one has the gout."

Pinkie began to play with her watch-chain.

"What do you think," she asked slowly, "is the best combination, with a chance of success, between two people?"

Mr. Casimir smiled. "Ah, there is no doubt as to that. As some great man has said, the first love of a woman and the last love of a man!"

They watched the passers-by for a few moments. Mr. Driscoll was thinking deeply. He was almost hating himself because he found Pinkie a little pathetic, and he tried to excuse it by noticing that she looked ailing and sickly.

"You will find several nice people here," he said presently, with rather an

effort. "The Graveses and the Willie Ordes, from Baltimore."

"Oh, I don't know that crowd!" returned Pinkie, stiffening again. "They're not my sort. It's too bad I didn't get here last week. Some old friends of mine were here then. But I was detained in Nice, where I've been, by a row with a dressmaker. The old idiot sent me three gowns I simply couldn't get on my back, and then tried to bully me into paying for them. But she barked up the wrong tree that time. That's not my style. I told her I'd see her hanged first. Then she got nasty and tried to cow me by talking about the law. She couldn't scare me, though. I laughed in her face and walked off. She'll see what Americans are made of, she will!"

"They are a set of thieves, these people," remarked Mr. Driscoll absently.

"Yes, they are. I won't be done by them, either. Why, in every hotel I go they think I'm just made of money. They'd fleece me every time if they could."

"I don't believe they find it very easy!"

Pinkie drew her lace wrap about her shoulders.

"I've got a good enough head for business. Well, it's getting chilly and the band's stopped. I guess I'll go in. I'm sorry you're off."

Mr. Casimir bowed. "Perhaps we shall some time meet again. Our little talk has been very pleasant. You are well, you say?"

"Well, sure, I'm well!" said Pinkie carelessly. "Oh, I'm all well, all right. When are you going back to America?"

"Probably in September."

Pinkie hesitated. "Do you think you'll see Dick?"

"Certainly I shall see Dick."

She had risen to go, and she lingered for a moment, her face turned from him.

"And you think—you think it's the first love of a woman and the last love of a man?"

Mr. Driscoll held out a protesting hand.

"I am not infallible, dear lady. I do not boast of that. My one strength has been that I have realized my limitation."

Pinkie was still thoughtful.

"You know an awful lot," she said.

"You've watched, and what's more, you've seen. Well, good-bye."

He smiled. "Good-bye. *Bonne chance* to you. May you, too, see. It is great fun—ah, great fun!" said old Mr. Casimir.

"More fun than being a cow?"

"It has proved so to me. I shall know very soon, and positively, which would have been the better role in my case. I am almost at the point, you see, where I play my last card, lay down my hand, and count my tricks."

Pinkie laughed as she turned away. "There's good sport in you!" she said. "So you haven't played your last card yet?"

"Good heavens, no! One never plays one's last card until one's climax comes. Now, I have never had a climax. I have always hoped for one, feeling that it would perhaps redeem a life of stolid inactivity. Old, fat, bald as I am, I may yet squeeze one in. If I don't I shall die serenely, if ingloriously—not a cow, alas! but a comfortable old pig!"

He watched her until she was out of sight, her trailing blue dress, her priceless lace wrap, her blatantly yellow hair standing out sharply in the glare of the lights.

"There she goes on her way!" thought the old gentleman. "God forgive me for hating the little monkey!"

A few moments later he strolled in to bed.

A journey was a thing that harrowed Mr. Driscoll's very soul. He was always determined to be uncomfortable in traveling, and he succeeded remarkably well. He hated the rush, he hated the noise, he hated money and tickets and time-tables, and, above all, he hated an early start.

In the morning he finished his last odds and ends in good season, paid his bill and sent down his luggage. He then established himself in his dis-

mantled sitting-room with a stale American paper, and sent his servant ahead to the station to buy the tickets.

Mr. Casimir kept his eye on his watch. He had concluded to set out at a quarter to ten; that would give him ample time to walk slowly to the station, meet Dr. Marcillac, curse the porters, and accept Mimi's bouquet of flowers. He was particularly regretful at leaving Mimi, and he was already planning in his mind the doll he would buy her at Spiez.

The hands of his watch were enragingly slow. He finished his paper and glanced lazily about the room, remembering the many pleasant hours he had spent there. He had not wanted to come to Mont-Enard, and he was sorry to leave. Like most men and all women, Mr. Casimir was inconsistent.

At twenty minutes to ten he could bear the waiting no longer. He rose with a sigh, took up his hat, glanced around for the last time; then, opening the door, he passed out.

He instantly saw, almost before he had time to collect himself, that something was wrong in the hall. There was a babble of hushed, confused voices, a woman's half-hysterical whisper and a man's insistent tones. The hall leading to the lift and the staircase was wide and not particularly well lighted. The old gentleman strode forward and found himself in the midst of the excitement.

Outside a closed door, just beyond his own, were standing two gendarmes. They were very businesslike and uncomfortably forbidding-looking. One of them held in his hand a document, evidently legal; both men wore swords and were grave enough to be unpleasant. Standing in front of them, her back against the closed door, was a much-befrilled French maid. The woman's hands were shaking pitifully and her face was blanched with terror. She was half sobbing and half hysterical.

She sprang forward as she caught sight of Mr. Driscoll.

"Oh, monsieur!" she whispered

brokenly, "oh, monsieur, help me! I saw you talking to Madame Faxon in the garden last night—you are her friend—you will save her——"

Mr. Driscoll turned to the gendarme who was evidently in charge.

"What is the matter here?" he said quickly.

The man touched his hat.

"Monsieur will pardon us, but we must do our duty. We bring a warrant for the arrest of Madame Faxon. It is served by Madame Bellefont, of Nice, and is for the nonpayment of a bill of two thousand francs."

The maid grew whiter than ever and clutched Mr. Driscoll's arm.

"It is the fiend of a dressmaker. Madame had trouble with her. She is sitting there in the salon, reading so quietly, and if—oh, monsieur, she is not strong, she is not strong! She must not be frightened—she must not in any way be frightened. What is to be done?"

For one supreme moment the pulse of Mr. Driscoll's whole being seemed to stop. "A fire, a runaway horse, an unexpected letter——"

What were the chances of his winning this great trick by one bold stroke? He saw his life stretched out before him, so monotonous, so useless, so vague, so undecided. He saw his eternal vacillation between comfort and effort, egotism and activity. He heard himself telling Pinkie that he had not yet played his last card——

He turned to the man.

"Would it be possible for you to accept a settlement of this bill without an interview?" he asked. He felt as if the maddening excitement that was throbbing through him must sound in his voice.

"It is totally impossible, monsieur. This is a warrant for arrest."

He braced himself again.

"You must serve this warrant on madame herself?"

"I regret it, monsieur, but it is absolutely necessary."

"Absolutely necessary?"

"Absolutely necessary."

Mr. Driscoll straightened his stiff old

shoulders. Then, in that great moment, the greatest of his life, he made up his mind.

He gently forced the woman away from the door.

"Go downstairs and see if you can find madame's *courier*," he said. "I will attend to this."

The woman wrung her hands.

"Ah, monsieur—yes, yes, I am going—but for God's sake do not let them open the door!" and she hurried away.

"We can wait no longer," said the gendarme impatiently. "I am sorry, but we can wait no longer."

He moved forward.

Mr. Driscoll stepped in front of him. He laid his hand on the knob. For a single second he paused. Then, with his bow of old-time courtesy, he opened the door.

XVI

It was early spring again, and in Dick's garden the first roses were blooming. Many months before Pinkie had died, suddenly and painlessly, from the shock of two gendarmes en-

tering her room at Mont-Enard-les-Bains.

Old Mr. Casimir, bent and infirm, sat on the brick wall in his beehive chair, basking contentedly in the warm spring sunshine. He was smoking, and a glass of whisky-and-soda was beside him.

His small, keen eyes were fixed down the garden path, where two people, a man and a woman, were standing. A smile of half-quizzical satisfaction was about Mr. Driscoll's mouth as he watched them, and his thoughts evidently amused him.

"There they are," he said to himself, "at last, at last! Cows of the worst type. I suppose they will soon take to singing 'Home, Sweet Home,' and playing backgammon in the evening. And I—useless old fool that I am—opened the door for them!"

He gave a little sigh; yet it was not a sigh of regret.

Then he leaned forward, caught up his glass, and took a long drink. He set it down again with a grunt of comfort, and he blinked sleepily in the sunshine.

"After all," he said contentedly, "one always has one's stomach."



THE HUB

"MEBBY you never thought of it, but Pruntytown is the centre of everything on earth, and I can prove it to ye!" triumphantly said a public-spirited villager. "Here, now—you start east and go around the world and you land right here again; and then you start north and go around and you git right back to Pruntytown."



FIRST BABY—What makes you think that your mother has suddenly become wealthy?

SECOND BABY—Well, for the past few months I haven't seen anything of her.

ONE CONTINUAL ROUND OF PLEASURE

"EVER have a continuous show here?" inquired the advance agent, who had concluded his business and was waiting for his train.

"Heck, yes!" promptly replied the landlord of the Pruntytown tavern. "It began shortly after thin-voiced, stoop-shouldered, skimpy little Lester Pinney dyed his whiskers a gay and rakish black and advertised for a wife. He got her, all right enough, in the person of a broad, commandin'-sized widow, with half a dozen rampant and uncurried children and an old maid sister who was, and still is, addicted to elocution, soulfulness and spells, and a couple of brothers too able-bodied to work except at the dinner-table, and a miscellaneous collection of missionaries, sigh-colly-gists, natural bone-setters, delarte chair-setters, hyp-not-nitists and other hypochondriconfoundednuisances, who come and go, but seldom fail to keep the house full, and all the time have appetites like dragons. Lester married to get a helpmeet and got instead a gang of help-him-eats. This happened some four years ago and is still goin' on—a continuous show, for men only, as you might say, but, contrary to custom, at the same time one with a pretty good-sized moral attached to it, if you just look at it right."

TOM P. MORGAN.



INFORMATION

"WHAT was the stream that we crossed about four miles north of here?" inquired a tourist, poking his head out of the car window and addressing a prominent citizen of Polkville, Ark., who was industriously leaning against the depot.

"Mostly water," was the frank reply.



A CINCH

ETHEL—Don't you think green and gold is a lovely combination?
EDITH—Yes—in a man!



"MY husband is awfully hard to please."
"He must have changed since your marriage, then."

THE THREE LITTLE AFRICANDERS

(A NONSENSE BALLAD)

By His Grace the Duke of Argyll

THERE were three little girls who each wanted variety—
Anne, May and Liz, who thought one another
More clever than father or mother or brother,
And said they would roam in each other's society.

The three were first, Anne, whom you almost might "stoggy" call,
But good at her lessons, good at her dinner;
Then Liz was the taller and stronger and thinner;
These took little Mary to see the Zoological.

There soldiers and nurses were feeding a Bruin,
And talking of fighting and nursing and glories,
And the girls, as they listened to African stories
Said, "Why should we three not be now up and doin'?"

"We'll sail away South by Victoria Station
Unto African land, to its lakes and its thickets."
So off they all went. "But oh, how about tickets?"
"Never mind," said wise Anne, "the Guard's my relation!"

She smiled in his face as the train was awaiting,
And they entered all three a cozy compartment;
The guard was so pleased with their smiles and deportment
He listened to all they were sweetly relating.

They wanted to go now to Netley—Southampton,
To see how the soldiers were nursed after fever.
They made of this guard so complete a believer
That ticket collectors were snubbed and were stamped on!

He saw the three girls safely down to the harbor,
Where they heard that a ship for the Cape was departing,
And slipping on board, as they heard she was starting,
They got stowed away in an under-deck arbor.

Yes, stowaways were they, unknown, unsuspected,
Right down among boxes and rats and cockroaches;
But hunger comes soon, and the hour soon approaches
When a move must be made and their presence detected!

So they went upon deck, and the captain received them
With nautical swagger and grin debonair;
He told them politely they need not despair
Of a quick homeward passage, which greatly aggrieved them.

And further, he told them, his voyage was ended
At the Castle of Cape Coast, and not Table Bay—
He'd tell all their uncles and aunts of the way
His rats had made holes in the plans they thought splendid!

So they came to Cape Castle, where, waiting home steamers,
They stayed at the fort in disgrace with the Guv'nor,
Whose fat, scarlet face would show them no love, nor
Any mercy at all for the poor little dreamers.

But a negro chief came from the Hinterland horrid
And took them by stealth in his own caravan,
When he heard from the lips of the resolute Anne,
She thought all attractive in realms she called torrid.

Then soon in the forest the chief made some bungle
And fell in a fight with a neighbor king-nigger;
And the scrape of our girls became bigger and bigger
When they fled all alone and were lost in the jungle.

Gorillas soon found them, and one of the mildest,
A mighty old thing, took them up in a tree,
And there they were cozy as cozy could be,
Though all their surroundings were surely the wildest.

Descending with them to take his siesta
They saw that he slept and made off to some flowers,
And spent a safe night in these fairy-hued bowers,
Which served them as bedstead and curtains and tester!

Adventures they had when onward they wandered
But the beasts were all kindness, and even a lion
But looked all the kinder, and seemed to rely on
The fact that his strength should never be squandered.

They entirely agreed with the lion, and never
Made trial of temper in man or in beast;
And when they found pigmies, of mankind the least,
The girls acted up to this honest endeavor.

The result was quite startling, the pigmies proclaiming
The smallest white lady the queen of them all,
And rejoiced on their foreheads before her to fall,
With heavy gold bangles her little legs laming.

She liked it, however, and shone so resplendent
Bedizened in gold from her crown to her toes!
Apes and peacocks were hers, and dark courtiers in rows,
And an elephant calf named as constant attendant.

She said then, "Escort me to sunrise and take me
To plains that are free from the forest's deep shade";
And their chief, in a piping voice, said, "I am made
Obedience to give—you may kill me and bake me!"

"Oh, no," she made answer, "we would not devour you.
For England but conquers to preach and improve.
The first resolution in meetings we move
Is to wash you, to clothe you, to tax you and scour you."

Each man was called Pygmy, each woman a Pygma,
And all asked to travel wherever went Lizzy.
She told them, however, that she was too busy,
And a useless Queen's title would brand her with "stigma."

"A stigma?" What was it? None knew! but their weeping
Told how it affected their nerves and their pride.
They howled and good-byed; the calf elephant cried;
Yet still her own way Liz insisted on keeping.

And soon, on the plains, they saw zebras a-sleeping;
And crept to the herd, and each mounted a-straddle,
And held to the hog-manes, and gripped the striped saddle,
And the zebras awoke with a scream and a-leaping.

With their tufted tails lifted, and hoofbeats of thunder,
Away to the South they fled racing and roaring,
The antelopes watching, the birds of prey soaring
Beheld the mad herd, and were stricken with wonder!

Giraffes, their necks towering, their hopeless eyes starting
From heads high aloft, all dark spots and ears,
Flicked up their short tails, their long legs; and their fears
Made them whisk away sideways, their senses departing!

So came this mad race to the "moon's snowy mountains,"
Where dwell 'mid the sun peaks white elephants grand,
White serpents, white tortoises, owls, and a band
Of white-hided rhinos that drink from white fountains.

"Up the slopes, quite exhausted, the zebras deport us,"
Cried Liz. "Let's alight, for my mount's all a-stagger."
The children dismounted, and said without swagger,
"We'll get down again on the backs of the tortoise!"

Each tortoise slow turned on their backs to prevent them.
This suited our lasses; the tummies were flatter:
Thus gladdened, our heroines mounted the latter,
And down the steep mountains triumphantly sent them.

So wild with delight, and shouting a slogan
Or good Highland war-cry, they darted and bounded,
Safe gliding o'er ice where crevasses abounded,
Each shouted that hers was the better toboggan!

Each tortoise, smooth polished, because of the friction,
At last reached a lake, and splashed in the water;
And skipped on the surface, as good skipper oughter
Make skip a good stone for the fishes' affliction.

But seldom quite straight is the course of the skipping.
So was it with them, and the skips went on curving,
Till close to the shore (it was rather unnerving!)
The children were skipped ashore, happy and dripping!

Flamingoes had called to the tortoises, "Toss her us."
For they fringed the long lake with "Balœniceps Rex,"
An awful big stork, whose bill, I suspect,
Was much like the head of a baby rhinoceros.

And truly, one rhino, a white one, had followed
Their course from the mountain, and down to the lake shore.
He charged, but got absent, or thought it a bore,
And stopped in his charge when, much frightened, they hollered.

They climbed up some trees, below which were feeding
Okapis, the newest of wonderful brutes,
Who found on their backs three tottering toots,
Who dropped from the boughs in terror exceeding.

So away again southward in sunshine so cheery,
The gallant okapis incessantly galloped;
Again into woodland, till almost mince colloped,
The girls on their mounts stopped still, hot and weary,

And found they had entered King Solomon's stables;
Hid deep in the woods, where a fort or zereba
Was made all of gold by the great Queen of Sheba,
Who vainly invited the King to her tables.

A visit returned was what she had wanted,
And made all her houses of African gold.
But these things the children were afterward told,
And ignorant now in the golden halls panted.

Asleep they soon fell on the bedsteads all priceless;
Their snoring re-echoed from walls of the gold;
For all was left tidy, concealed from of old
By thickets the Londoners love to call "niseless."

Adorable forests! Oh, Solomon! Sheba!
How grateful we are to your Orient names!
The peace of your sleep is now broke by the claims
Of miners, prospectors, and life's fitful fever.

But thanks for this rest for the children who, lazy,
Stayed for some months in the shadow of fanes,
Of courts, and of temples, and sheltered from rains,
Heard the deluges fall to swell high the Zambesi.

Then soon they embarked on a tree trunk gigantic
And floated downstream, and bathed and coquetted
With all birds and beasts that get wholesomely wetted,
And got a canoe from some natives romantic.

So faring Eastward with hippos a-flirting
They won their affections—a useful thing truly—
For when you've arrived in a country quite newly,
You ought to be thought not too self-asserting!

But lo! as they floated one day on the river
The currents were quickened, and swirlingly boiling,
Made paddles quite useless, though hard they were toiling,
And they saw rising spray iridescently quiver.

It volleyed to heaven, a mile wide, and roaring,
Arose where the currents were sucking along
As though the wide ocean were raging in song,
Rock-leagued, a loud chorus boomed forth overpowering!

The falls of Zambesi! Oh, "turf and oh, murther,"
(As the Irishmen say), what power now could save them?
A hippo upset them, his wagging tail gave them,
And towed them to land, and then smiling, swam further.

So there in the shallows he left them a-stranded,
Very shy, for on shore was a red clergyman,
With a wife of great beam, and inordinate span,
And the hippo had brought them no clothes when he landed.

Two rows of small darkies were pleased beyond measure,
And grinning like so many miniature ogres,
Were sent with commands to bring them some togas,
And the stout lady clothed each, and called each "her treasure."

So they went to a nice mission-house with verandy:
The red-bearded clergyman took them and fed them,
And down to the Portuguese settlements led them,
Making each little tourist a feminine dandy.

They thought when in England the Portuguese mashers
Were colored like coffee, or in yellows and blacks,
And found with surprise that no Portuguese lacks
A white skin, straight hair, and most lovely mustashers.

A naval man offered them seats in his gig-boat
To take them aboard a ship in the offing,
For a company called "British India" was offering
Them all a free passage in their new, fine and big boat.

So happy at last on the decks of the Briton
They laughed till they cried, and were all taken home!
If others now wish to do likewise and roam
They know from this narrative how they can get on.

Okapis will soon be the horses in fashion,
 And our girls mean to ride them in sweet Rotten Row;
 All African treasures to London will flow
 And African tours be a dominant passion!



THE TROUBLE IN HIS CASE

“A COAT-OF-ARMS,” soliloquized the count, “is an excellent thing as far as it goes, but one must have other coats.”
 He shrugged his shoulders, and as that did not seem to do any good, he sighed.



IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG

“PERCY tells all he knows.”
 “A great talker, eh?”
 “Oh, no—deucedly quiet.”



THE LINE OF DEMARCATION

HOLT—The worst thing about a fool is that he doesn't keep his mouth shut.
 BENSON—Well, if he did he wouldn't be a fool, would he?



WHERE THE FUN COMES IN

DYER—Do you get any satisfaction out of a five-cent cigar?
 RYER—No; but I derive a lot of pleasure in giving them away.

UNSEEN OF MEN

By Kate Jordan

THE quiet room was filled with crocus-colored light from the wood fire. A man and a woman sat facing each other, a little distance apart. In the one corner where the shadow hesitated, touched only at intervals by the flare of the flames, there was a low table covered with china and silver. The roll of the wheels on the asphalt and a further murmur of the town's life came in from the dusk-inclosed street.

Gazed at by the unknowing it was not a picture to suggest a tragic situation, but the woman knew she would not forget a detail of that room, in that hour, while she lived. The dire, imperious moment of her life was on the stroke. She knew the man's next words would be sweet with temptation and have renunciation for their shadow.

"You're leading a wretched life, Mary. No human being has the right to saddle another with such days as you spend. Cast them away—get your freedom. You long for it. You will have it, if you're not a coward."

She did not look at him, but he saw sadness slip, like a mist, over her face. The look was an answer and it whipped his desire to brutality.

He crossed to her and lifted her clasped hands to his lips.

"You love me. You've said so. Remember that."

"I remember," she said, without hope.

"Then why do you look as if this were an eternal good-bye, Mary? It's not good-bye. It's life together, sweetheart, wherever you wish, far or near, if you'll only end this tragedy of mar-

riage." He touched her hair with his fingers as if he soothed a fretful child. "You'd leave the bitterness, sorrow and disgust behind you. Darling, I'd make you so happy."

"No, no," she said hastily, beseechingly. "Oh, Miles, if you knew—if I could tell you. I love you, dear—that's true—but I can't do what you ask. I want to, but I can't." She put his arm away, and stood up, her eyes helpless. "I knew the moment would come when I must choose between you and Anthony, and I've kept saying to myself, 'I'll throw away this husk of marriage and take my happiness. It's my right.' Over and over I've said it, insisted on it, as I've welcomed you and looked for you wherever I went." Her arms fell despairingly. "But no matter how fiercely I said it I could not stifle a voice that would speak to me at night, in the darkness, when I couldn't sleep: 'You can't do it. Say what you like, desire it, and plan it, but you'll never do it.' So the horrible duet has gone on, and tonight I know that voice was right. I despise Anthony, but I pity him, and I can never leave him, never, never."

She stood as one without defense. There were stress and storm in Miles's face.

"So you're going to play the contemptible part of the vine wreathing itself around a dead tree. Your husband is a slave to a drug. You may sacrifice yourself trying to save him, but he'll continue to be just what he is, a creature who is gibbeting himself in the public eye, polluted, abominable. Is this demanded of you? What good

do you do him? Does he consider you? By what right does he shame you? What sophistry makes you endure it?"

Her face was wistful, her gray eyes frightened, as the heated words rang out, and in her white gown, over which the fire wove flaming arabesques, she was very sweet. His fury sank into tenderness quickly and he tried to draw her to him.

"I can't do without you, Mary—I, who love you, need you. I can't leave you to such a future, dear, and I can't stay near you seeing you this way. I want you for my wife, forever."

She trembled; her eyes were full of dumb entreaties. She regarded him pitifully.

"I'm so sorry for you, Miles, and for myself," she drew away as she added, "and for him. It's all miserable." She moved to the window and stared at the street down which the November wind rushed as if in pursuit of a twilight ghost. When she turned again her face was calm. "I'll try to let you know what I mean. It's this: Anthony seems more cursed than cruel. He isn't unkind. He does nothing to hurt me at—at—other times."

"He can be pretty loathsome, though, when he's doped—can't he?" came crisply and brutally from Miles's lips.

"Oh, yes," she whispered, shrinking a little.

"You've prayed to him to reform, and how has he heeded? He knows when he isn't a madman that he's killing the best in you by inches. He must know you don't love him, and that it's only pity makes you stand by him."

Mary looked ashamed.

"I've never really told him that. I think he believes I can't help loving him to some extent. I've never hurt him by really saying——"

"I see. This is another phase of the human sacrifice," Miles muttered. "When did you see him last?"

"He hasn't been home in three days."

"Where does he go at such times?" She shook her head in despair.

"I try never to think of that. I don't know. I'd rather never know."

"What a life for you! Oh, my dearest!"

"What would become of him if I were gone?" she murmured, looking past him.

The question was like oil to flame. He stood over her in wrath.

"You say I can't understand you, and I can't. Oh, fling away this burden. The man you cling to is like an extinguished candle. There's only the rotten wick. Try to think of him as dead."

At the word a light transfigured her, flared in her eyes, and died slowly out. Her head drooped. Miles had noticed the fleeting blaze of hope. He put his hands on her shoulders and commanded her eyes.

"Suppose," he said slowly in a curbed, intense voice, "you heard this moment that he were dead? Would there be a glimmer of any feeling but relief? Would there?"

"I'll not answer you."

"Would you be glad—yes, glad? The truth."

"I'll not say it," she whispered, and pushed him from her. She stood apart breathless, with eyes that seemed to see a ghost. "Please go," she whispered, "please."

"This isn't good-bye," Miles said doggedly; "I won't have it so. It isn't sane."

When he reached the door she called him back.

"Don't go, that way," she said piteously. "Indeed—indeed—it is good-bye."

She held out her hands and when he touched them her fingers stole up his arms and were fastened around his neck. He met her kiss through which her heart seemed to pass. When he held her from him his eyes were wet, his voice was gentle.

"Mary, I'll never speak of this again, never see you again, if you will it so. You must walk by your own star, dear. I see it now. I can't be a law for you,

for each is a mystery into which even the dearest can't enter. But don't decide finally this moment. Tonight, here, alone, think it all over. Don't give Anthony all the pity. Think of yourself, of me. We both have rights and wrongs to go into the scales. Write to me tomorrow. What you decide must be, shall be."

A moment followed during which a wave of longing passed over Mary's soul, the word of surrender faltered on her lips. She covered her face with her clutching hands, his touch in passing fell on her head, a footstep came from the hall, the door closed.

This night was a frayed seam running through her life. There was a fantastic fiction about it. Again, she seemed a figure in a dream treading on the edge of great abysses. Though she suffered, nothing was real to her sick brain. When summoned to her solitary dinner she ate unwittingly of food that was tasteless. Afterward she returned to the drawing-room and rested in the big red chair. She suffered numbly. Her life was disheveled. Miles had told her to think and decide finally. She could not. For three nights she had watched for her husband's return. Today she had wrestled with a temptation. She seemed resting hopelessly after a struggle with hungry seas. She slept, while the light flickered on her gray-white face.

When she awoke a nervous convulsion flung her forward in the chair, the clock in the hall was chiming four, the fire was out. Fear seized her, a formless panic. She had been asleep. Perhaps something had happened. Perhaps Anthony had come home. She stood up trembling. Life was at its thinnest and feeblest in her body.

The light burned in the quiet hall, and in the curve of the upper stairway shadows slept. The whispering of her silken skirt made soft inflections on the silence as she went up the stairs, crossed the passage and faced her husband's room. It was empty, orderly, the lamp burning under its red shade, the fire laid for lighting. She turned her head from side to side. Only the

stillness of the raw, sad hours was her companion.

The thought of preparing for sleep was hateful to her. To lie in the darkness, listening, would be impossible. With her dinner gown on, her hair coiled, it was easier to make night seem like day, and waiting was robbed of some of its weariness. She tied a scarf around her shoulders, went down the stairs again and turned her chair to a spot where the curtained light from the lamp fell on it.

Now her brain was alive. After the deep sleep she was like a keyed instrument from which a breeze could strike variations. She had grown dismally accustomed to such watching as this, but it had never seemed so intolerable before. Fate had entered the house; she heard its step in the halls; its breath moved among the curtains; it was in the air, bending over her, clothing her in its shadow.

Now indeed, as the night crawled on till it was close to dawn, she obeyed Miles and considered her life—its distress, leanness, spiritual destitution. It was for such nights as this she had sent him away. Sobs hurt her throat. Her sad patience became a smarting sense of personal wrong. Miles's words beat in her ears: "No human being has the right to saddle another with such days as you spend." Yet she had spent them, how many, and how patiently! Her mind's eye traveled back over the long line of miserable days and nights, the daily inquisition, lapses, disappointments, anxieties, vigils. Her heart seemed a threadbare thing.

It would be different if she could be free, marry Miles, and live in Italy. She would be happy then—but would she? Could she forget the shipwrecked creature she had forsaken? Could she ever escape him, ever shed this pity for him? Not while he lived. If he were dead, past suffering more, past sinking deeper, past missing her—well, then—yes, that would be different.

A sound startled her. She sat forward clasping the sides of the chair, every muscle tense. There was the

click of a key moving cautiously in the lock of the street door. On the dismayed quiet it filled the house with alarms. She tried to spring up, but apprehension nailed her to the chair.

The door was closed without the slightest jar, and she saw Anthony go swiftly and carefully up the stairs. He did not look to right or left. That he moved like a phantom whose passage was preordained held some sick significance. His return after previous absences had been different. He had always entered that room first, had looked for her there before going up the stairs.

She cautiously followed him. His door was closed. She paused at the threshold, her finger nervously moving about her lips. As she groped for the knob, but before she could touch it, the lock slipped loosely and left the room visible through the space between the hinges.

Anthony's back was toward her. To see him in the business clothes he had worn when leaving home was so out of tune with the hour and the place he seemed a stranger. As he turned, the mirror showed her something appalling. He was examining a revolver under the gaslight. His face was strained, wild, and the sickly skin was drawn taut over a mask of bone.

She did not seem to breathe as she watched. He took off his hat, pressed the muzzle of the pistol to his temple, first one spot, then another, his glassy eye measuring the effect critically. She saw him nod with a satisfaction which chilled her, lay the weapon on the bureau and begin to undress.

Mary sank against the wall and hid her face in her hands. Questions jostled each other in her brain—the meaning of it? His actual intention? A devil laughed in her soul; she was cheating herself by this speculation; she knew the truth. Anthony had returned a physical wreck, but clear-minded and nerved to destroy himself. A flash sketched the future in tints which enraptured her. He would be dead—she, free from him—the chains she could not break fallen from

her—and Miles—Miles—but this was an ecstasy without definiteness. A glamour she had not thought to feel again touched her; her soul seemed steeped in perfumes.

She drew near to the long, narrow line of light again and looked in. Anthony was seated in his night-clothes, a purpose flaming in his face, the pistol in his hand. She tiptoed cautiously to a seat against the wall, and sat there, her body bent forward, her eyes on the door.

As if watching a ghost-picture she saw a different self, acting differently. She saw the self rise, rush into the room, seize Anthony's hands, crying: "No, you shall not, you shall not." The picture repeated itself many times while she had a tingling consciousness that she, the real woman, listened and waited.

No sound came to relieve her. But to rise and look in again demanded too much of her. The moments went by, each one a cold, heavy drop upon her heart, her fingers kept opening and closing impatiently. She moved restlessly. He was a long time. Surely it should be an easy thing, a business quickly over—the thought trailed away unfinished. Again she was conscious of that other self, saw the ghost rise and falter into the room, crying: "Anthony—no—no—you must not!" But she sat there, motionless, her face ugly in its eagerness, her mouth open.

Her patience was stretched almost to breaking when a sound came from the hidden room. It was a sob which might have issued from living lips in a closed grave; it was a thing which had to do with Dante's fancies of the damned and not with life at all.

She wavered to her feet. The expectancy died from her face and in its place an awful self-knowledge left her shaking.

Now she copied the movements of the ghost-self she had cynically watched. Her husband's name, pierced by fear, rang from her as she scuttled to him and struck the revolver from his fumbling hands. He seized it, they struggled for it desperately,

and she was victor. As she stood over him, half fainting, she clasped it to her heart as one would a treasure. There was a miserable love mixed with defeat in Anthony's eyes as he stared at her.

"You don't know what I am," he muttered; "no, you don't. I've been a curse to you. But tonight I became another kind of coward—afraid to die—afraid—afraid. Do you hear? I looked into that muzzle twenty times, and at last I said: '*I am afraid.*'"

She did not seem to see him. The look on her face puzzled him. It was worn from the rack of emotions, but a transcendent relief flared in her eyes. He gazed at her with new intentions. She was rejoicing to have saved him, who caused her only pain. His worthless life was worth so much to her. The thought was terrible yet helped to lift from him his own self-contempt. He saw the faint hollows which suffering had picked out in her face, and recalled her as she had looked the day they were married. Side by side with the memory was the unbearable recognition of his own baseness. He sank at her feet, groping for her hands.

"Oh, if I could live, really live; if I could, Mary," he groaned. "You love me."

"I don't love you," she said in a quiet voice, cold, after the passion in his; "but you must live." The pistol was in her hand and she looked past him. "You shall live to help me find the way back to what I was," she said, and now a ripple of grief made her lips tremble. "Stand up," she said, still quietly, but with a scorn which lashed him to his feet. "You tell me to see what you are. Take your eyes from yourself, and see what you've made of me."

"I've broken your heart. Don't I know it?"

"You've done worse than that. I've been a miserable woman for a long time. Tonight I became an evil one. You thought I loved you with this broken heart of mine. Only pity kept me with you. Today because of

this same pity I sent away the man I love, and I sat in this empty house, hopeless. You came back an hour ago. I saw you pass like a ghost up the stairs. I followed you. I saw you with the pistol." The words choked her; she stopped. "I saw you with the pistol," she repeated with difficulty. "I waited out there in the hall for you to kill yourself. I waited, I wanted to hear the shot, I was hungry to hear it. Now do you understand what you've made of me?"

She raised to her mouth the hand that held the pistol and sobbed against it like a grieved child.

Anthony was dumb in the face of a truth not dreamed of before. The thought that she did not love him, loved another man, took away the last spar on which his self-esteem had unknowingly rested. To think of himself as dead and passionately mourned, in spite of his sins, had been one thing. To realize that as a human being he had come to be an encumbrance whose exit from life would bring relief to the only creature he cared for, was quite another. When he spoke his voice was chilled and humble.

"Yes, I understand. You only agree with me—I'd be better dead. Well, this time I flinched," he said, with a desolate smile. "The next time——"

"You don't understand," she said wildly. "Don't you see that only your living can help me back to what I was, wipe out the moments in the dark hall, win me God's forgiveness? No matter how you make me suffer, no matter how low you fall, though your life become a curse to you and to me, you must live, Anthony. You must live, for I killed you in my heart tonight."

A heavy silence hung between them, and slowly into the man's eyes there came such an intolerable shame of himself she winced to see it, and her own self-disgust and remorse faded into pettiness before it.

She had loved his grace and beauty. There was a little of both left, like a memory, as he held out his hands.

"I've lost you." She was silent.

"You'll never believe—nor help me—now."

"Can I?" she sighed.

He caught at the words with pitiful greediness.

"I know what you're thinking—you've tried so often—I know. But if this time—if this time—Mary—I could live, not to shame or hurt you any more, but to redeem myself. What you've said tonight—oh, Mary, what you've said! I'll never forget it—it will be like something beside me always pulling me back. Mary, I won't touch the stuff, if you help me, I

swear it—I won't—I'm not damned utterly—no! Oh, to go back," he pleaded between set teeth, "to go back, to begin over! Would it matter to you, Mary? Would you care a little?"

The dawn which had been changing from a ghost to a half-revealed watcher, now leaped, a radiant presence, into the room. They were like souls meeting in a space that was not earth's. An electric brightness touched their worn faces. In the man's there was hope, in the woman's the never dying tenderness.



THE GOD OF CLAY

I WATCH each day my singing sisters go
Lightfooted to the temple on the height,
Bearing fair gifts, trailed blooms of rose and snow,
To please the golden gods of their delight;

The golden gods that, in their lofty place,
Stand in their flawless might for all to see,
Bearing each one upon his perfect face
The pride of his infallibility.

And ever on their way and singing thus
They pause sometimes to urge me or deride,
"O sister, wilt thou never come with us
To worship where the gods of gold abide?"

They never know that, ere they pass the gates
Of bronze and ivory, I take my way
To where, in his unlighted darkness, waits
My desecrated, shattered god of clay.

Before their golden gods my sisters cast
Their fleeting blooms, the gladness of their years;
I bear to my degraded god this last
Great gift of silence and of awful tears.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



OSTENTATIOUS virtue is vice in one of its most obnoxious forms.

A LEAK

By Guy Bolton

THE profession of architecture has, since the day of Ictinus of Athens, been the rope in a tug of war. On the one side was the respectable artisan world—on the other that which is merely artistic; and the inevitable rending of the intermediate body awaited only the time when the growing weight of the opposing forces should have become too great for its strength.

So when it began to be demanded of the practitioner that he display proficiency in both plumbing and water-colors—a nice faculty for the adjustment of proportionate masses and of disproportionate charges—the break occurred, and the world turned round to discover that architects, like Irish terriers, may be either long- or short-haired.

Miss Adelaide Woodhull and her sister had, however, heard nothing of this in their lavender-scented lives behind the vine-covered brownstone-front. They sprang from a generation that had been taught to speak with pride of the Capitol at Washington; and they still referred apprehensively to the effect of the Romanesque revival upon the growing art of a young nation, while the more modern listener wondered vaguely as to what the Romanesque revival might be.

So it was, then, that when Miss Adelaide had stiffly ascended the stairs to view the dark patch on the ceiling of the maid's room, she pronounced the verdict to her less active sister that Paul must be sent for.

"You see, Abbey, he is an architect, so, of course, he will know what to do." And the missive was forthwith de-

spatched to their schoolmate's son, asking him, with a quaint mingling of stateliness and affection, to come and give them some professional advice.

Of course it was Paul's own fault that he had not told the two old ladies of the disruption of his profession and pointed out the significance of his ample locks, but a pretension of versatility is still more highly prized than the narrowed specialism of an exacting age.

It was not without some trepidation, however, that he met Miss Adelaide in the hall and, having bestowed a filial salute upon the wrinkled cheek, deposited his hat upon the gleaming mahogany table.

"We regretted having to trouble you, dear boy, especially in the afternoon, but women are so helpless in these matters and the modern artisan so unreliable."

"Is—is it the valve thing in the tank again?" asked Paul apprehensively.

"Oh, no!" she reassured him. "Simply a leak in the roof that became evident after yesterday's storm."

"I see. We'll just run up and have a look at it," he said, with a recovered confidence that made Miss Abbey, who had just entered, sigh relievedly. "Adelaide will take you up," she said. "My running days are over, I fear."

Paul frowned professionally at the dark patch and poked it with the maid's umbrella, while Miss Adelaide, gazing admiringly at him from the doorway, heaved a spinster's sigh at masculine superiority.

"You needn't fear," he pronounced at length. "It won't come down.

But I had better go up on the roof and locate the leak. Then I'll chalk the spot, and the tinner can fix it."

Miss Adelaide opened the door of a closet that contained the ladder leading to the roof.

"You will be very careful while you are up there?" she cautioned, as the doughty young man, having removed his coat and rolled back his sleeves, proceeded to climb up and unfasten the scuttle.

"Oh, don't fear. We get used to this sort of thing. I'll give the roof a thorough examination while I'm up here and rejoin you in the parlor in about half an hour."

The broad sweep of the Hudson caught Paul's beauty-loving eye as he emerged upon the roof. On its west bank rose the fissured wall of dead lava; on the east and stretching to his feet was the great city, suggesting a similar phenomenon in process of formation—the hollows already grown few in number, the myriad little wisps of smoke still rising from hidden fires.

He gazed at the panorama for a few moments and then stooped and commenced scratching the tin with his knife in quite a businesslike manner, though with but a hazy notion as to what the indications of a leak might be. A voice calling him from behind brought him round with a start.

"Man!" it said.

There was something so primal in the salutation as to quite disconcert the young architect, and then the scene that met his eye was unusual to an overpowering degree.

The adjacent roof to the east—raised perhaps two feet above the level of the one on which he stood—was shadowed for a quarter of its length with a red-and-yellow Venetian awning. Great potted plants grew in luxurious banks of green up and down both sides, while a marble seat or two backed up against the balustrade completed a most entrancing little roof-garden. All this his eye swept at a glance, but stayed where, in the deepest shadow of the awning, a hammock dipped in graceful curves around a be-

wildering complexity of lace and ruffles; a fleecy setting from which rose the warmly colored oval of a girl's face, gazing at him with dark, serious eyes.

"Tell me, man," continued this Titania, having assured herself of his attention, "what are you going to do on that roof?—not build anything, I hope."

"Oh, no, miss, only a little tin work to be done," he smiled.

Among Paul's varied emotions there was no room for resentment of her mistake. A quick glance downward convinced him she was not unjustified. The dust and cobwebs in the stair-closet had not been disturbed for a considerable time.

"I'm so glad," she said relievedly. "That ought not to take you long." Then, noticing the rather blank expression on the young man's face, she explained, "I am not in view from any of the neighbors' here, so I like to run up in *négligée*—that is, quite informal costume."

"Oh, that's all right," said the tin-smith obligingly. "Don't mind me."

She eyed him coldly for a moment, then raised her book and resumed her reading.

Having stood for a moment without gaining any further attention he continued his interrupted examination of the roof. Presently he straightened his back again and after a furtive glance toward the hammock ventured an undeserved encomium concerning the weather.

The sylph graciously relaxed sufficiently to contradict him.

"This is the first time I've been able to be up here for a week."

"It must be very nice to sit up there with a story-book!" he suggested, purposely limiting himself to homely phrases.

"I don't read fiction." She closed the volume on a slender white finger and held it up for his inspection. "This is a book that should interest you. It's on the labor question and takes up the kindred sociological problems involved in trades-unionism."

He shook his head smilingly. "This

is an age of insidious fiction. We frequently find it disguised in statistical form." He found it impossible to tame his rampant vocabulary, but the sociological student looked only mildly surprised.

"Men are all alike," she replied. "My father said very much the same thing when I made him read that delightful book of Professor Webb's, which proved that heaven was in the moon—on the side turned away from the earth, you know."

"The latter part at least sounds very plausible."

"Yes, but father is so prosaic. He says theories have no interest for him—facts alone count. But as I pointed out, while facts are of course the foundation, any architect will tell you that a foundation is so much wasted material without a superstructure built on it."

"Why, yes, I see that myself."

"Of course. It is like everything else an architect tells you. It either isn't true or you knew it without asking him. I'm sure I don't know what they are for," she digressed, "unless it is to help old ladies select wall-papers." Paul's intention of disillusioning the young lady as to his fancied occupation received a rude shock. He longed to inquire as to what members of his profession she was acquainted with, but reverted instead to the previous topic.

"You believe, then, that every fact should be set out to gain usury in theories, not wrapped in a napkin and buried?"

The occupant of the hammock dropped her feet upon the graveled floor and shook herself into a sitting posture.

"I thought you seemed to be well educated and—if you'll excuse the personality—now I know it. Your simile was from the Bible, wasn't it? I was just reading a passage in this book." She turned the pages quickly. "Ah, here it is: 'With our splendid educational system it is not astonishing that we should find behind the unpromising exterior of these men' (it means mechanics) 'a brain active

and trained to a disconcerting extent; men with whom we may converse, when once we pass the barrier of a surly awkwardness, without any essential debasement of the conversational plane.' Do you know, I was very skeptical when I read that, but you have proved to me that it is true."

Paul shook his head gloomily. "Education generally does harm to a mechanic. I knew a man once who was very proud of his reading, but he was only a helper and was always losing his job through a habit he had of quoting Meredith's aphorisms whenever the foreman called him down. The foreman said 'he didn't mind a fellow' answering back so much, but when a chap talked to him he'd have to begin at the right end of what he had to say.'"

The young lady smiled. "You shouldn't make fun of education, though," she said earnestly. "It's a sacred trust laid upon us that we should use for the betterment of our fellows. You particularly, I believe, could accomplish tremendous things if you once set about it. You see, the trouble has always been that men of education usually have no interest in helping the submerged elements of society to rise." She pulled out a little watch. "I have to go now and get tea ready for my father. I always attend to things like that myself—but I hope to continue our talk tomorrow if you have any more work to do up here."

She gathered her skirts and walked over to a sort of covered companion-way. "I am afraid I have interrupted you dreadfully."

The tinsmith raised a deprecating hand. "I, in turn, fear that I have deceived you a trifle. I'm not really a mechanic, you see. I'm just doing this to oblige the owners, who have misguided confidence in me."

"Ah! I see, the Union recognized in you a leader, and elected you to the board," she interrupted. "If that is the case my apology is certainly superfluous. You've been working quite hard—for a delegate." There was a

gleaming smile accompanying her friendly "good-bye"; a quick rustle of skirts and the young man was left staring blankly at the yawning black opening that had swallowed his enchantress as though she had really been of sylphic mold.

He decided to postpone any further operations on the tin-work until the morrow, and after some adjustment of his attire he descended to the waiting tea-table in the formal, high-mirrored "parlor," where he declared in the face of the old ladies' protests his intention of coming on the following afternoon to repair the leak himself. "Much the safest way," he said, reaching over to the cake plate, "when the job is a delicate one."

They seemed quite flattered by his admiration of the view and the interest he took in the neighborhood. "It is a nice house," agreed Miss Adelaide. "A Mr. Whitney and his daughter live there—the mother is dead. It is only very recently that we have met them—quite casually; but both Abbey and I found Miss Whitney charming and hope to know her a great deal better. I also hope that when we do we may find an opportunity of presenting you to them."

Paul expressed a conventional delight at the prospect. He also made another inquiry.

"I don't believe I know. Do you remember Miss Whitney's name, Abbey?"

"Rose, I think."

"When tongues speak sweetly then they call her name,
And Rosalie they call her,"

quoted Paul softly.

"It's just Rose," maintained Miss Abbey stoutly.

"Ah, well," smiled Paul, "the same poet says the name you call the rose alters nothing of the flower's sweetness."

On the following day the early afternoon sun saw Paul on his knees hard at work, applying paint skins to a large area of tin roof while the

hammock swung empty in the fitful western breeze.

He had not been there long, however, before a light step and an easy, informal "Halloa!" brought him quickly to his feet.

He removed his cap and bowed.

"Good afternoon—citizeness."

She laughed, slipping comfortably into her hammock.

"I see you think I'm very democratic—*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, and all that. Well, I am. It is the professed doctrine of our country, and I believe we should live up to it. Do you know, I look upon you as my equal?"

"In accordance with what standard—social?—academic?"

"As a member of the community."

"Oh, no; as a member of the community I am your superior. I am a man——"

"A political injustice no more makes you my superior in that respect than a social injustice makes me your superior in any other. But I think there should be quite a bond of sympathy between us, from the fact that we belong to the two most oppressed classes of our time—Woman and the Workingman."

"If they make you feel that, I hope our wrongs will never be righted," said the gallant apostle of down-trodden labor.

"Another point we have in common is that we are both in all likelihood termed prigs by our fellows," she continued reflectively. "It is the penalty one must always incur for rising above the ideals of one's own class. Your associates probably think you are affecting a superiority in not limiting your interests to as narrow a sphere as their own; and I am accused of the same thing because I can't interest myself in men who think only of amusement, or because I try to be a good housekeeper and go through the simple, careful routine that our mothers followed."

The young man perched on the coping listened, amusement, admiration in his eyes. He deemed his

seniority sufficient to allow him a smile at her Babel—the stunted pile of generous enthusiasms that youth raises toward the ideal—but he felt that even these refreshing qualities have their drawbacks when she insisted on his giving her a “labor leader’s” view of the industrial situation.

He complied reluctantly; entering into verbose though hazy explanations of the relations existing between the Brotherhood and the Association; welcoming the while any issue of feminine inconsequence that would lead the conversation from the subject under discussion, and if possible into more personal channels.

He had managed to advance matters very satisfactorily when Miss Whitney—who had formally introduced herself—discovered it to be long after her hour for afternoon tea.

“It’s strange we have found so much to talk about. I haven’t had a chance to go over all the ground I wanted to on the suffrage question. You will really *have* to find something more the matter with that roof,” she smiled.

“There’s a great deal more to do on this job,” he replied cheerfully. “I shall have to spend at least five or six more afternoons up here.”

She colored slightly as she met his direct gaze. “I hope you’re doing it as piece-work, even if it is contrary to the rules of the Union.”

“I must confess that I am being grossly overpaid!” he said.

The two old spinsters became quite concerned to think they had been living under a roof that required such a deal of attention.

“It isn’t so much the leak,” explained Paul upon meeting them after the fifth or sixth day of his labors, “but a little experienced attention now—‘an ounce of prevention,’ ‘a stitch in time’—will save it from going to pieces later on.”

“Oh, no,” he broke in on Miss Adelaide’s apologies. “You needn’t say that. I find it a pleasure to work

up there. It is a most delightful roof.”

“Your generation uses such overdrawn adjectives,” sighed Miss Abbey. “I suppose you mean a well-built roof.”

“Oh, no, I don’t, dear,” he defended. “I mean delightful, ecstatic, Elysian.”

“He is speaking of the view,” said Miss Adelaide.

Of whatever Paul was speaking he was forced to forego its pleasures, for almost a week of nimbus clouds permitted only of rubbered pilgrimages to the office where the “practical” member of the firm remarked upon the extraordinary influence the weather seemed to have upon his partner’s spirits.

When the young man at length presented himself at his old friends’ door along with a sun that seemed eager to make atonement for its recent neglect, he was met with the disheartening news that all his well-meant efforts had been unavailing. The brown patch had spread.

“I am sure Paul will get on well,” said Miss Adelaide a few minutes later to her sister. “He has such an indomitable spirit. When I told him just now that all his work last week on that wretched roof had done no good, he didn’t seem to be in the least discouraged—just pulled off his coat and ran upstairs humming a tune. It’s really distressing to think of all the trouble we are giving him.”

But all thought of the unconquerable leak had vanished from Paul’s mind as his head emerged from the scuttle and his eyes rested on the pendulous hammock with its gracefully unconscious burden, reading the usual tome of depressing and monumental aspect.

She was studiously intent, one index finger tracing the page, the other pressing a becoming dimple into the soft cheek. The neatly drawn, fair hair with its complexity of unmanageable shorter curls softened the outline of the head and suggested just that relation between a seriously devoted

mind and its whimsical inconsistencies, which was perhaps the truest part of her nature.

The contracted features relaxed into a smile as she suddenly became conscious of Paul's gaze. "You daren't tell me it's the same leak!" she said.

"The same dear old leak—a most happy *immedicabile vulnus* since its dressing—must afford my only excuse for being here."

She surveyed him with the untempered earnestness of youth. "A man should find nothing unconquerable," she said, ignoring the personal direction of his remark.

He laid down the implements he had brought with him and regarded her in turn. "There are times when not to succumb to fate is the merest madness."

"Yes—madness of the sort that has built empires and freed slaves."

"You give heart to my presumption," he laughed, and springing lightly to the parapet, stepped down upon the neighboring roof.

She regarded his movements with interest but without apparent emotion as he lifted a heavy marble garden-chair of Italian chiseling, and set it down in front of her.

"You are very strong," she said rather wonderingly.

"And you like strong men. I am also very daring, which is another quality you admire. There, you see, are two reasons for liking me."

"I am sure you know I do like you," she replied quite gravely. "Do you remember I told you last week that we were to be friends?—real friends who are going to help each other in the work we do for the betterment of our fellows. So you must not term it presumption when you take a seat by me."

He did not reply to her directly. He was quite carried away by an idea—an intoxicating, wild-headed idea that had come to him with the flash of perception as to what she liked—what would appeal to her most strongly. If he waited he might in the natural course of things arrive at this same point armed with a logical and con-

ventional appeal. His decision was reached under the thrilling influence of her nearness. He did not stop to think of the longer, safer canal. He would shoot the rapids.

When he replied it was to her first words. "I wonder if you like me enough to listen while I tell you how much I like you?"

She raised a hand interruptingly. How stupid not to have seen what was coming before!

"Now, don't," she protested. "I know what you are going to say and your saying it will spoil everything—the unusual quality of our friendship; our usefulness to each other and to the causes we both have at heart."

"No," he replied, still standing with his hands resting on the back of the marble seat. "What I had to suggest would not end all that—it would aid in its fulfilment. But perhaps I had better tell you some other things," he went on in a purposely hardened voice; "tell you that your devotion to the cause of liberty is the merest pretense; that your vaunted belief in social equality is so much theoretical absurdity, unable to stand the first practical test; that you are posing, not only to the world, but to yourself."

"No, no; stop!" she interrupted. "You entirely misunderstand my motives."

"Ah! you would say you do not care for me enough? Perhaps not—but why? Because I do not attract you as other men do? Because our tastes and ideals are dissimilar? You have yourself assured me of the reverse. No, it is because I am a workingman. You have the usual, commonplace class-prejudice. You do not take a man for what he is, but consider his position and circumstances."

"It is not taking a man for what he is, but 'for better, for worse,' that holds me back," she smiled whimsically. "I am sure it is not customary to take so serious a step, even in the most democratic circles, without some knowledge of the man other than the obvious facts of his education, his prepossessing appearance, and the discov-

ery of a remarkable coincidence in your taste and opinions."

"Oh, I can bring witnesses to attest my soundness in mind and limb—physical, moral and financial. Indeed, both my means and the social position of my family are not so inconsiderable as I have allowed you to suppose. They are things without weight in the balance of friendship, but I mention them now, for high as we may set the standard of personal worth, they are matters of account in the choosing of a husband."

"No, no!" She was leaning forward eagerly. "Least of all, are they of weight in the balance of love. You do not think so, I know. It is your great generosity that makes you say so—Paul."

The Christian name was uttered with a bare moment of hesitation and accompanied by a slight blush. It brought Paul to her side with a scarcely coherent burst of gratitude.

She gave him her hand and let his arm reinforce the support of the cushions behind her, but she held back from further advances. Her father must be consulted, maintained the champion of women's rights.

There was, indeed, little trace of the independent spirit of the modern woman as she laid a small, soft palm over his lean, muscular hand.

"And you are one of the real workers," she said in a sort of gentle wonderment, adding yet more softly, with a glance upward to his radiant face: "If love were not blind you would see what a foolish little creature I really am."

His answer was very satisfying though distressingly illogical, and the conversation, with its long, eloquent pauses, slipped through the warm, golden afternoon, while the light western breeze rustled in and out of the tall plants, now and then fluttering some of the little ringlets against Paul's cheek in a way that was delightfully maddening with its intoxicating token of her nearness.

The sun had dropped majestically into an emblazoned west and poured

slanting rays under the awning before the moment of parting came.

"I shall ask my friends, the Misses Woodhull, to call on you tomorrow, and I must come and meet your father. I shall be rather a bolt from the blue, I expect."

"Quite literally! But I know he will like you."

"I wish I were as sure. But perhaps I had better not come until my friends call. They will tell you something I should have told you myself—only I feared it might make a difference."

"It is nothing dreadful, I hope?"

"Oh, no! quite the reverse. But if you had known it, it might have—well—postponed these blessed moments indefinitely."

"Tell me," she said, resting a hand anxiously on his arm.

"It is about my profession," he began a trifle nervously. "You rather jumped at conclusions, you know."

"Yes; when I first saw you working I assumed you were a tinsmith, but you told me you were a tinsmith's delegate."

"No; pardon me, dear, that is where you jumped at a conclusion again. I was going to explain my true occupation when you anticipated me by speaking of my election to the board of delegates, and then ran off without giving me a chance to elucidate matters. It seemed so funny you should really think I was either of those things."

She drew her hand quickly away and stood gazing at him, a dawning apprehension in her eyes.

"What are you?" she asked.

He bowed his head before a premonition of the impending disaster.

"An architect," he said.

He saw the sudden pause in her breath, and then the rise and fall of her bosom quicken.

She clutched vainly at one chance. "There are two branches in your profession; some are engaged with the constructional side—are more properly engineers—?"

The abyss yawned before him, but his lips seemed unable to shape the lie

he longed to utter. "I am a designer," he said.

"A designer!" The words trembled scornfully on her lips. "The effete branch of a debased profession. And you deceived me into thinking you were a real worker—you, a dilettante copyist whose chief command of success must lie in an ability to flatter society women as to their taste, and whose 'work' consists in poring over your photographs for an 'inspiration.' No wonder you were afraid to undeceive me before!"

"I never supposed you would carry your ridiculous class-prejudice to such lengths. An architect may be just as good as a hod-carrier."

"And your—devotion to the cause of liberty!" she continued, unheeding his protest. "That was of a piece with the other frauds, I suppose? And it was on that and the mutual assistance we could give to the cause most dear to us that you presumed to appeal to me—to go to the lengths to which you have just gone!"

She walked over to the stairway and turned with a hand resting against the open door. "At least I can thank you for telling me before the events of this afternoon were repeated."

"How about 'individual worth,' and 'the standard of honest, unstriving manhood'?" he said, bitterly flinging her own words at her. "Let me tell you—who 'care nothing for a man's trade or his social position,' that you are the worst snob I ever knew. Just because I am not a proud-crested mechanic; just because my social orbit is not in the fourth estate—" But he stopped and turned away. His taunts were wasted. She was gone.

Not Paul's heart alone, but his pride was deeply hurt. The wound her loss caused him was aggravated by the knowledge that there had been nothing personal in her liking for him. He had merely basked in the favor bestowed on the class she exalted so fantastically, and to which she had imagined he had belonged.

He realized how it had occurred. The discovery of refined tastes and

alert, well-educated faculties had been in a workman both praiseworthy and interesting, where among men of her own class these things would have excited but the mildest approbation. It was the old human light in the freakish—much the sort of thing that made the duke's daughter marry her butler, "because none of the men she knew came up to her standard of good manners."

But what use, indeed, was it to raise these questions now? The incident was closed. The interrogation points would be gaping on the wrong side of the period. The thing to do now was to forget, and Paul set himself to that task with what heart a man may whose spirits have sped upward, rocket-like, only to find the momentary burst of resplendent success swallowed by a black nemesis—a sickening, earthward reversal of the flight—a reassertion of the bonds of gravity. If he had only been content with a steadier, slower-growing illumination!

But regrets were of equal futility. He decided to go on a business trip likely to be of considerable length, which had been allocated to his partner.

As he went about the business of packing up he tried to engage his mind with less chafing topics, and was meeting with a feeble success when a letter lying on his breakfast-table, the very day of departure, reopened the wound.

He had written to the Misses Woodhull of his intended trip, expressing regret at his being unable to come and see them before leaving the city.

"But really, dear boy," wrote Miss Adelaide, "I do wish you would make an effort to stop here for a few moments in the morning before you go to the station. Not only are we anxious to see you before this sudden departure, but that leak——"

There followed a full page of reiterated reference to the unreliability of the modern artisan, and the unbounding faith which the two old ladies had in himself.

Paul's unhallowed summary probably retained all the essentials. "They

want me to go up on the roof and fix that damned leak again."

He felt that "fix again" was perhaps somewhat of a euphemism. Indeed, he began to wonder if Rose Whitney had not been near the truth in her summing up of his uselessness. As she had so constantly asseverated, she liked men who *did* things, and he hadn't been able to "fix" a small leak in a tin roof.

What held him back from going and doing so now was, of course, the fear that he would encounter the fair owner of the roof-garden again—though she had once assured him that she spent only the afternoon there. On the other hand, it was rather difficult to refuse without seeming churlish—and then that rankling notion about men who *did* things! Yes, he would go and fix it. He would at least vindicate his ability to do the simple tasks of the manual laborer.

A visit to a nearby tinsmith who had been engaged before on some of his firm's operations equipped Paul with both the tools and the knowledge of how to accomplish his task. It was really not difficult to understand—even for an educated man.

The two sisters were genuinely delighted to see him; indeed, he found their undisguised pleasure a trifle surprising in comparison with their customary old-fashioned restraint. Undoubtedly they were grateful for the trouble he was taking to repair the leak.

* Paul heaved a relieved sigh as he once more pushed back the scuttle and saw that the adjoining roof was deserted and that the door opening on it was uncompromisingly closed. He noticed also the marble chair still standing where he had placed it; but not

caring to prolong the inspection of a scene every detail of which awakened sensitive trains of reminiscence, he set busily about his work, endeavoring at the same time to keep his thoughts fixed upon what he had in hand.

Down in the street below a barrel-organ began to play a familiar, sentimental song with the occasional rattle of an automatic drum, and Paul's hammer-taps unconsciously adjusted themselves to the tempo. Popular, sentimental songs had always annoyed him, but somehow the recurrent minor chords, he reflected, did seem to belong to sentiment.

He had almost finished the job, in a neat, workmanlike manner, too, he reflected, when there came from some nearby factory that cheery, bourgeois shrilling—a steam whistle. The tinsmith smiled and drew himself up on his knees. It was the signal to stop work.

The discordant sound covered another—a light step on the neighboring roof.

It was a voice that brought Paul round in a tumult of emotions.

"That is the lunch hour. Won't you take this?" She held out a dinner-pail.

He got up stupidly, almost unconsciously, and walking to the dividing parapet, took it from her. He made no attempt to speak—his mind was groping for some understanding.

"And you might bring it up here," she was looking away now. "You will find it more comfortable."

Then he understood—understood even the real reason for his being there and the half-suppressed eagerness he had noticed in the two old ladies.

He went, but, strangely enough, he left the dinner-pail behind.



HE—Won't you tell me the story of your past?
SHE—Which one?

THE BIRD LOVER

OH, I am a lover of birds—
 Audubon was not in it with me.
 I beat him by quarters and thirds
 In doting on larks in the tree.
 No mortal e'er loved more than I,
 The thrushes, a caroling host,
 And oh, what a joy when I spy
 A fat little quail on the toast!

My being responds with a thrill
 To nightingale's measures at e'en.
 The chirp of the robin doth fill
 My soul and my heart and between.
 The eagle that soars in the blue!
 The white gull that seaward doth go!
 And oh, what an ecstasy true
 In ducks *à la* Delmonico!

I love to reflect on the owl,
 To contemplate wisdom so rare
 That leads this remarkable fowl
 To think without using hot air!
 And ah, what a pleasure to sit
 In a flat-bottomed craft, what a joy,
 Down Chesapeake way where they flit,
 And gaze on the luscious decoy!

What bliss in the oriole's note,
 What joy in the pæans that come
 Like liquid from out of the throat
 Of meadow-larks on the way home!
 What pride in the condor we see,
 How free is the jay from regret;
 What palate but yearns thirstily
 For roasted reed-birds *en brochette*!

Ah, friends, let us all of us dare
 To bird neighbors e'er to be good,
 No matter if high in the air
 They soar or dwell hid in the wood.
 Let's stretch out our arms to them all,
 Endeavor their liking to win,
 And show them, whenever they call,
 How gladly we'll gather them in.

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.

DINNER GHOSTS

By Pomona Penrin

EVERY table in the café was engaged. As he pocketed his hat check Desham eyed in high discontent the glittering rows of diners. It was bad to have unexpectedly to dine alone on a blue day; but it was worse not to dine alone if one's vis-à-vis must be a stranger.

Regardless of the blandishments of the beckoning head-waiter Desham made a leisurely survey of the room. Since there were no vacant tables he looked about for a table occupied by one man, and he at his coffee. He found several.

"But not there," he promised himself as he passed the first one, "for the man is still hungry. And not there, either. I will not dine opposite a man whose mouth looks like a robin's."

At last, in a corner far removed from the music and modestly but not perilously near an electric fan, Desham saw a table for two with a little plant in the centre. Beyond the little plant was a little man. He was mixing a salad dressing with such fine deliberation that Desham delighted in his own decision to sit at table with him. He did so, with an apology.

The little man glanced up leisurely and bowed—not nodded. He was more than sixty, with much white hair, and rimless eyeglasses held by a heavy black cord. He was critically suspending a spoon above a bowl of golden green dressing, and just delicately flecking its edge with the bulb of white garlic set near his plate. When Desham had given his order his vis-à-vis was finding his salad delicious.

"He might," commented Desham to his admiring self, "almost be reading

that lettuce, instead of eating it. Two glasses for the Burgundy," he added softly to the waiter.

Desham had a smile like a child in its cradle; a smile like Desham's can do no wrong that is not welcome. He leaned forward as the waiter pulled the cork, and smiled at the little man.

"I am a bit lonely tonight," he said. "Will you not join me?"

Into the quiet gray eyes of the little man there crept a faint, grateful sparkle.

"You are kind," he said simply; "I shall be delighted."

When they lifted their glasses Desham smiled again.

"Now a toast that we may both drink to," he said, as an accurate and courteous way to try the social mettle of his impromptu companion. "Will you propose it?"

The little man looked at Desham critically for a moment, measuring him—but so daintily that it was flattery. Then he leaned forward.

"To one or more of the minor necessities of dinners which nearly everyone forgets," he said gravely.

Desham felt the compliment to his own taste and intelligence. He would not have to prove himself to this man then, or to prove him farther. They could go on quietly upon common ground, each feeling the pleasurable glow of being overestimated, which is the only real appreciation. Desham flashed the quick look of understanding which had won him so many grateful hearts.

"Good," commented Desham softly. "Of which ones were you thinking, may I know?"

The little man moved aside the

plant, and they saw each other for the first time without a ruffle of green under each other's chins.

"I was thinking about waiters," said the little man, mechanically setting his glass over a fleck on the shining cloth. "What a disloyalty—and worse—what a *gaucherie* it is to bring a lady to a café to dine, and to have her served by the same waiter who last night and night before and last week served you and—someone else."

Desham looked up in surprised amusement.

"Really," he commented, "that is a nicety that I've never formulated. Still," he confessed, "I have been conscious of that same indelicacy."

"Of course you have," said the little man; "so has every gentleman in his café moments. Man does not dine on bread alone, sir."

"Certainly not," admitted Desham, selecting a leaf of his artichoke.

"Understand me," said the little man, "I deplore the system quite aside from any complication which may arise from the indiscretion of a waiter. For the faithlessness of a waiter to the woman with whom I dined yesterday, and his bondage to the one with whom I am dining today affect me as an insult to my former guest and hypocrisy to my guest of the present."

"But—" said Desham.

"Not at all," said the little man. "The waiter who served her one night with sympathetic understanding of steak which must be browned through—can I see him the next night bending deferentially before my next guest's choice of salads without desiring to shake the fellow? When his back is turned I feel as if I had been lacking in loyalty myself."

"But do you think," ventured Desham, "that this aspect of dining occurs to many women?"

"Their very unconsciousness of it makes them pathetic," promptly returned the little man. "When a pretty woman enters a café she is entitled to the assumption of all who see

her that her escort is at least her admirer. She may plume herself innocently upon this, and take her place at table with a feeling and a look of naïve satisfaction. Is it therefore fair to her that the waiter to whom she hands her wrap is able to compare her beauty, her distinction, even her gown itself, with those of the woman who enjoyed the homage of her host on the previous evening?"

"No, it is not nice for the woman," assented Desham; "only, you see, she never knows it. She is too busy resurrecting or laying old ghosts of previous hosts—maybe at the same table, maybe with the same waiter."

The little man dismissed the suggestion reproachfully.

"It is not the same," he said positively, "it is not the same. An illustration which applies to a man applies to a woman only inversely. You have only to argue with the gentlest woman to determine that."

Desham smiled, and the reproach on his companion's face vanished. Desham had so often smiled with the same result that he no longer realized that he was trading upon a charm. Besides, when a man trades in this fashion he wins a reputation for personal magnetism; but when a woman does it, however innocently, homelier women always "my dear" it to one another behind their fans.

"What would you suggest?" gravely asked Desham. The delicious thing about all social abuses is that they may be discussed, thus giving opportunity for endless advice which no one will ever take. "What would you suggest?" Desham wanted to know, quite as if the advice mattered.

The little man reflectively touched his cup to his lips.

"Of course," he said gently, "the ideal way is never to dine in the same café with more than one woman. Unfortunately," he added, "there are not enough cafés."

"And so you have remained loyal in some other way," assumed Desham appreciatively. "Will you tell me your way?"

In the first gray mists of an admirable cigar, and with his cognac yet in anticipation, the little man looked at Desham with genial confidence. The Burgundy had lent a faint flush to his cheeks, as of some delicate excitement.

"It is very simple," he said. "Like most great successes, it requires only devotion to an ideal and the co-operation of a few—may I say?—under-dogs. For years I have exercised that devotion, and I have now the co-operation of five estimable waiters who fully believe that Chance is solely accountable for what I have so carefully planned.

"I have," continued the little man, "been accustomed this year to dine here in this very room with five beautiful and accomplished women upon none of whom would I willingly put the slight of believing herself to be second in my esteem. Consequently, my loyalty to each is so great that I could not honorably treat her precisely as I would treat all the rest. For I am not one of the vulgar folk steeped in the stupidity of modernity," described the little man earnestly, "who find secret humor in revisiting a memorable spot within a few hours, and there re-enacting a scene of homage lately passed through, even though—as they believe possible—both scenes be quite sincere. I do not argue the matter of the possibility of such sincerity; I only discuss a far more modern thing: the taste. Neither do I find pleasure in an avowal of homage carefully couched in the identical terms used in a previous and, it may be, equally honest confession. And as for the present fashion of stealing away before having coffee with one guest to send a telegram to another—that is unthinkable. The only masters of taste in this great, metropolitan game of dining are those who would no more do violence to one situation by interpolating the rules and catchwords of another than they would leave the soup to taste an éclair. It is not conceivable to intrude upon one dinner the technique and terminology of another. No, there should be nothing done in one dinner consciously to

call up a ghost. Else the diner is either an amateur or inapt at the art."

Desham was mute.

"Early, then, in my choice of this excellent café," proceeded the little man, "I found myself dining here with one whom I may call Japonica. To my horror, as I was seated, I perceived my reflection in a mirror at exactly the angle at which I had surreptitiously considered it but the night before, and I saw that I was about to dine at the table where—shall I say?—Florine and I had often been exceptionally merry. In agitation I rose and myself led the way to that corner by the turn of the stair which has since invariably been sacred to tête-à-têtes with Japonica. 'Send me,' said I to the head-waiter, send me Maurice. Madame prefers him to all other waiters.' This, upon reaching the ear of Maurice, made him the slave of Japonica. So it was with her whom I will call Elise, and Gaston the waiter. So with the Duchess and Louis, who always served her. And I have managed so adroitly," admitted the little man, "that not one waiter suspects the truth—to say nothing of one lady. Each believes that he is the favorite of the lady whom, he thinks, would eat no food not placed before her by his hands.

"And what is the result?" inquired the little man triumphantly. "I am spared hearing that same Louis consent to cut off for Japonica the plover's head before serving, and the next night ask Florine or Elise if she will have her plover headless. I am spared the guilt of listening to Maurice protesting to Japonica that hollandaise is not possible with cold asparagus simply because he is haunted by the recollection that Elise always orders it. And Gaston is not able to note the coincidence that both Florine and Elise prefer thick soup and have no sugar in their coffee. What is it to Maurice that both Japonica and the Duchess invariably salt their sweet butter? He has never served the Duchess in his life!"

Faintly, and just so near that the rush of the Elevated train could not

drown it, the orchestra fell a prey to its alluring habit of "Oh, That We Two Were Maying." Over the face of the little man crept an indefinable change which softened his features, and did not fade; instead he seemed to catch up the expression like a mask and to toss it away with a laugh.

"Ghosts!" he said. "Look at them, pair by pair, at every table in the room. It would be humorous if it were not tragic. Ghosts of dead loves and ghosts of past dinners. You cannot lay the old loves, but you can dispose of the dinner ghosts. For I myself have done so."

Desham lighted his cigar and was silent. Above the clatter of dishes and silver the May-song showed its appeal for tears. The little man's cigar had gone out.

"It is indecent," said the little man, "to play memories to people's eyes like that. I wonder that any of us dare listen to music or see the play in one another's presence. See, every man and woman in this room is secretly trying to read the ghost in the others' eyes—while they play."

Desham rose suddenly. Several minutes before, the little man had faded quite from his companion's vision, and another face had risen and glimmered there faintly, like a remembered star. Desham found himself looking straight into her beautiful eyes, pleading for even an echo of old days. He was staring so fixedly at the little man that they both apologized.

"I shall hope," said Desham as they parted at the door, "to find you here again some night, alone."

The little man smiled and bowed so graciously that not until afterward did Desham remember that his companion had not echoed his hope.

It was nearly a month later that Desham, having regretfully accompanied a white-gowned guest to a dinner to which he was not bidden, found

himself thanking heaven that her beautiful eyes had not changed, and that it would not be long until eleven o'clock when he was to call for her. In the meantime he was free to dine once more at the café made memorable by his evening with the little man.

Desham looked eagerly about as he entered, and almost at once his eye fell upon the white hair of his new friend. Manifestly, Desham thought that he saw he was dining alone, but it was annoying to find the other seat at the table already occupied. Desham moved toward him intending to ask if he might join him later, when with some amazement he saw the man smile and address the woman who was his vis-à-vis. She was a little woman, more than sixty, and her singularly sweet face was softened by little gray curls. Desham stopped short. Where, then, were Florine—Elise—the Duchess—Japonica?

"Can you tell me," asked Desham of the expectant head-waiter, "who that gentleman is, by the pillar? He dines here frequently, I think."

The head-waiter bowed.

"Oh, yes, sir," he said. "That is Judge Pounceford, sir, and Mrs. Pounceford with him. They have an apartment upstairs, sir. They've scarcely missed dining here an evening for ten years or so, since the place was first opened."

"Ah!" said Desham, and sat down at his solitary table. Over the menu card he stole a glance at the two by the pillar, and his smile was not quizzical, but almost tender.

"When I am seventy, and the days grow colorless," thought Desham, "I shall remember that. Over my Burgundy I shall call up as shining a company as he did, with no disloyalty to anyone. At all events, his arguments were sound. And what perfect dinner ghosts they were—Florine—Elise—the Duchess—Japonica!"



"Of course he has a conscience."
"If so, he has it under perfect control."

HER REPLY

By Ethel M. Kelley

DEAR JACK:

In reply to your letter
I only can say I'm afraid
That I'm not ready yet for the fetter;
I think you've mistaken your maid.
There's no one I like any better—
There's no one I like half so well—
But I can't vouch for men I've not met, for
You never can tell!

Beseeching that I will be candid,
You ask me what stands in the way;
You deserve, dear, if ever a man did,
The frankness I grant you today.
Don't say that your life will be stranded
If you make a failure with me;
Remember, no fish ever landed
Equals those in the sea!

And that's just the gist of my trouble;
I'd readily yield you the past,
I'd walk quite content harnessed double,
If every day dawned like the last.
But, ah! I can't barter the bubble,
The faith in some future surprise,
The chance that the dreams in the grub'll
Grow bright butterflies!

If I could be given a potion
Like that which to Iseult secured
Sir Tristram's undying devotion
And bound her with ties that endured,
I really have more than a notion
I'd swallow the love-draught with you;
But while there are "fish in the ocean,"
It never would do!

I'd pick you, dear Jack, in a minute
From all of the men who are real,
And yet, don't you see? you're not in it
Compared with my heroes ideal!
My heart, you have scarcely to win it,
I am yours and not yours in a breath;
But my constancy—how could you pin it
Secure until death?

THE SMART SET

Ah, life grows so strange as you live it,
 And youth at the best is all fuss;
 And love is a curious rivet
 That pieces the bosoms of us.
 Read over this note and forgive it,
 And think with all kindness of

Jo.

P. S.—I am not positive it
 Is final, you know!



STRONG CARDS

ALICE—Which of his letters did you save for your breach-of-promise suit?
 CLARISSE—The ones he told me to burn.



JUST SO

CONSOLING FRIEND—There! there! Don't grieve so; tears cannot bring
 her back.
 WIDOWER—I know it! That is why I weep.



THERE ARE OTHERS

“HE——”
 “Oh, I know it! He’s as big a fool as if his father had been a great man!”



“MRS. VON BLUMER never will mention the word legs. What does she
 suppose she stands on?”
 “Oh, *she* always stands on ceremony.”

THE HARVEY CHASE DOCUMENTS

NARRATED BY OLIVER PERRY STONE, U.S.N., NAVAL ATTACHÉ AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY TO THE COURT AT ST. JAMES

By Arthur Bartlett Maurice

THE AFFAIR OF THE TRAITOR'S STAIN

AFTER Harvey Chase had cleared away the extraordinary tangle in what at the Embassy was spoken of as the affair of the Unlimited Discretion and, what is more to the point, had carried the King of Lombardy in safety through the day of the Coronation, I was officially directed to hold myself at his disposal for anything that might come up during such time as the Washington Government deemed it advisable for him to remain in London. Of the affair of the Unlimited Discretion I am not at the present moment at full liberty to speak.

Now that this task was at an end Harvey Chase had apparently disappeared. Not that he had said anything to indicate that he purposed leaving London, but he came no more to the Embassy nor had he been seen by anyone connected with the service. In this way three or four weeks passed. I had settled down again to the monotonous routine of daily duty, when, before I was up one morning, there came a laconic message bidding me meet him for breakfast at Morley's.

We had finished the meal and were sitting in the little black smoking-room with the deep and somber chairs, the tables littered with railway guides and bound volumes of *Punch*, and the two narrow windows looking out over Trafalgar Square. But little good these windows did us, for the city was in the clutches of the London fog.

"Sorry to disappoint you, Stone," said Harvey Chase between puffs at his cigar, "but I am afraid that the matter in which I want you with me today is only commonplace. I can't even promise you the slightest of international complications. In fact, I can hardly say that I myself am concerned in a really professional capacity. It is just a little everyday murder—at least, that is what the London police state—and the fact that the man suspected is a naturalized American citizen is not at all what draws me into it. The fact is that during the last few weeks I have been making a rather careful study of the London police methods and have been able to give them a hint or two which the Londoners are good enough to think of value. It is not government work at all, but this is the fifth or sixth case that I have looked into, and as I have missed your bright, young, blessed, innocent enthusiasm lately, it struck me that you might have a little leisure time and a wish to see a side of London which is not on the surface. So far I have only the slightest outline of the case. But I am expecting Sergeant Prodgers here at any minute, and he will be able to go over the affair at greater length. Meanwhile, try a fresh cigar.

"Now," said Chase a quarter of an hour later, as we were rolling through the fog, "we have at least twenty minutes. Suppose, Prodgers, you put the case before Mr. Stone just as you did before me, and begin at the begin-

ning. I may derive something from hearing it all over again. At any rate, it can do no harm."

"There isn't so much mystery about it," said Prodgers, shaking his head with a knowing air; "in fact, I may say that to us it seems perfectly clear. Nor a very important case at that. Only a matter of finding a man and clapping on a pair of handcuffs. It was only because the man we're hunting will probably claim American citizenship that I thought of referring to Mr. Chase. Still, as he wishes, the story is something like this:

"Mrs. Moss, the widow of a publican who used to make a book on the races as a side issue, has for the past four years—that is, since the death of her husband—kept a lodging-house at No. 38 Bevin street, just off Soho, much frequented by the foreigners—French, Belgian, German, Italian and Russian—who are so numerous in that quarter. The neighborhood is, on the whole, an unsavory one, and the woman herself does not bear the best of reputations. In this case, however, that is neither here nor there. Well, it seems that eight weeks ago there came to her house two men who engaged adjoining rooms on the ground floor level with the street. They gave their names as Ribot and Ritz, had no ostensible occupation, but until two weeks ago always paid their pound a week—and a good rate it is, too, for Bevin street—with great punctuality. Mrs. Moss says that at first she could wish for no better lodgers. They were quiet, gave little trouble, and if one or the other or both were occasionally out all night that was none of her business. She professes an unexplained dislike for Ribot, and according to her description he was certainly not a beauty in looks. It was about three weeks ago, she says, that a great change came over the behavior of her tenants. There were sounds of frequent quarrels.

"One night she listened at the key-hole and heard Ritz call the other 'spy' and heard Ribot raise his voice threaten-

Ritz seemed still well supplied with funds, Ribot apparently had come to the end of his money and Ritz refused him any assistance. The Frenchman—Mrs. Moss spoke of him as such though it seems that he is a Swiss-American—was not only in arrears for two weeks' rent, but in addition had succeeded in borrowing from his landlady from time to time small sums aggregating two pounds and eight shillings—no small amount for her. She had reached the end of her patience, and yesterday threatened to have him dispossessed. According to her testimony, Ribot muttered something about looking for a great change in his fortune within a few hours, but she attached little importance to his words until afterward. Early last evening Mrs. Moss had occasion to pay a visit to a friend in the neighborhood. She returned early and remembers hearing the church clocks striking ten as she crossed Soho Square. As she turned into Bevin street and neared her door she was startled to hear the bolt within drawn back and to see the door opening inch by inch. Thoroughly frightened, she slipped quickly into a little dark recess close to the wall, and waited. The door opened and a head was furtively thrust out. It was the head of Ribot. He looked up and down the street, saw it deserted save for an approaching hansom, and stepped out on the sidewalk. The light from a nearby lamp shone full upon his face, and the woman saw that it was ashy gray and that his features were twitching with excitement. In his hand he carried a bag. The cab drew near, and hailing it softly, Ribot told the driver to go to Paddington. Mrs. Moss's first impulse was to stop him and demand the money he owed her, but second thought convinced her that she was well rid of a bad bargain. So after watching the cab move off she let herself in with her latchkey, and went upstairs to bed."

"One moment," asked Harvey Chase. "Does she remember noticing anything out of the common as she passed through the hallway? No peculiar smell, for instance?"

"No, there was nothing to arouse her alarm."

"H'm!" said Chase. "Please continue."

"Early this morning Mrs. Moss came downstairs and began her daily duties. She had been moving about but a few minutes when, passing the door of the room occupied by Ritz, she was seized by a reasonless fear. For some cause there flashed through her woman's mind a fancy that all was not right. Against this fancy she struggled in vain; something seemed to be pressing down on her and overwhelming her. When she could bear the suspense no longer she ran out on the street, and finding Police Constable Burke, told him her fears. At first he was skeptical, thinking it was mere nervousness, and tried to soothe her; but at length he was impressed by her apparent excitement and consented to accompany her into the house. To repeated knocks at Ritz's door there was no answer. Burke at length put his shoulder against the wood and forced it in. All about the room there were signs of a struggle. The chairs and tables were overturned. A small iron safe in which Ritz had been in the habit of keeping money and papers had been forced and rifled. Fully dressed and stretched out on the bed was the body of the unfortunate owner. It took a close examination to find, directly over his heart, the small bullet hole through his coat that was the cause of death. When the officials came and had listened to Mrs. Moss's story they turned their attention to the room of Ribot. It showed plainly that the man had prepared hastily for flight. But every precaution has been taken, and if I am not greatly mistaken it is only a matter of hours before we have him safe under lock and key."

The neighborhood in which we now found ourselves was an ill-omened one, and the heavy fog only added to its gloom and squalor, nor did the lighted street lamps afford much relief. At length the carriage came to a stop, and alighting, we found ourselves standing in a narrow, winding street lined on

both sides with two-story houses of a dull drab, with here and there a splotch of color where one could see strange letterings in foreign tongues. In appearance No. 38 did not differ materially from its neighbors to the right and left. A low iron railing separated the two front windows from the pavement. A single broad step led to the door, in the middle of which was a huge green knocker in the shape of a frog. Instead of entering at once, Harvey Chase tarried for a full ten minutes, looked up and down, glanced at the adjoining houses, examined carefully the uneven pavement, stepped out on the asphalt with which the street was paved, and finally took hold of the iron railing and threw his weight to and fro as if to test its strength. Prodgers looked on with stolid dismay, although I could see that he was more than a little impressed. When at length Harvey Chase signified his willingness, we entered the house. We observed that the door opened into a hallway leading back past the rooms occupied by the two foreigners. That of Ritz was in front with the windows facing Bevin street.

As we pushed open the door to this room and entered we were confronted by a sour-visaged official who regarded our intrusion with obvious disfavor.

"What does this mean, Prodgers?" he asked sharply.

Prodgers reddened in his embarrassment.

"You see, inspector," he stammered, "I thought it would be all right. This is Mr. Harvey Chase."

"Oh, did you?" sneered the other. "Well, it's not, and you shall hear from it at the Yard. Mr. Harvey Chase," he sneered. "I bet, you guess! No, we can manage this affair without American smartness."

"Still," said Harvey Chase, with a grim smile, "I rather think I shall stay." He took out a pocketbook and drawing from it an official-looking paper, handed it to the inspector. Instantly the latter's manner changed. Gone were all the sneer and bluster. The man seemed positively to cringe.

"Really, sir, I beg pardon, sir. I did not understand, sir. It shall be as you say, sir, just as you say."

He was positively yellow with humiliation. Harvey Chase turned with a shrug and began to look about. Everywhere there were signs of a struggle. Chairs and table were overturned. On the bed in the dark recess something was covered by a sheet. Chase turned back the sheet and looked long and earnestly at the countenance of the dead man. It was a handsome face, the face of a man of perhaps thirty-five years of age, but seamed with lines of care and sorrow. The jet-black hair was in places splashed with gray; the eyes were distended in a fearful stare. On the left side of the breast a little clod of coagulated blood showed where the bullet had penetrated.

Chase had whipped out a magnifying-glass and tape measure and was swiftly and noiselessly slipping about the room, examining every inch of floor and wall, shaking his head and mumbling to himself. Once or twice I heard him grunt with satisfaction and knew that he was hot upon some scent. Then he came over to where I was standing by the body and bent above it, sniffing at the dead man's coat. Afterward he turned his attention to the collection of the belongings which had been found on Ritz's person, and which consisted merely of a watch, a bunch of keys, loose change to the extent of two or three pounds, and some memoranda of apparent unimportance. He was engaged in fingering these when a messenger from police headquarters entered and handed a telegram to the inspector. The latter, who had been regarding the American with sullen and suspicious resentment, seemed to pluck up courage.

"Good!" he cried. "Listen to this from Carlisle: 'Man answering description taken here this morning upon alighting from train leaving Paddington at ten-forty last night; when searched found package bank-notes and letters addressed Ritz, London; being sent on under close surveillance. (Signed)

Pendleton.' Well, what do you think of that, Mr. Chase?"

"Excellent," said Chase, looking up in an absent manner. "We may need him."

"It is more than possible that we shall," muttered the other.

"However, he can wait," replied Chase. "At present I am more interested in this." As he spoke he held up a sheet of paper which conveyed nothing to us, since it seemed merely an itinerary of places and dates. It ran as follows:

Odessa, June 20-23; Budapest, June 25-28; Vienna, June 29-30; Schoenbrunn, July 1-15; Trieste, July 17-18; Venice, July 19-21; Viti, July 22-August 5; Florence, August 6-8; Rome, August 8-15; Fior, August 16-September 1; Genoa, September 2-3; Paris, September 4-October 15; Enghien-les-Bains, October 15-25; Paris, —.

"What do you make of it?" asked Chase, turning to me.

"I make nothing of it," I said.

"And you, inspector?"

But the inspector only shook his head.

"Yet it suggests something," Chase went on. "It suggests many things. Not that the handwriting is anything out of the ordinary, although it offers clues in the way of nationality and rank. But surely the places and the corresponding dates must convince you that this is not the itinerary of an ordinary person. Let me in particular call your attention to Schoenbrunn, Viti and Fior. I tell you, this affair may be bigger than we think."

He sprang to his feet and paced nervously up and down the room.

"I must say, Mr. Chase, that I don't follow your reasoning," interjected the inspector obstinately; "but what I do follow, and what is much more to the point, is that one of the fastest trains of the Caledonian Railway is bringing back to Scotland Yard this Ribot, the man who killed Ritz last night, and just now that's more to the point, according to my way of thinking, than all your American theories."

"True, you don't seem to be over-strong on theory," said Chase, with a touch of sarcasm in his voice, "but

will you kindly pass me over the watch which you found in the pocket of the dead man? Thanks. H'm! Twenty minutes past twelve. You see that it is a watch of a well-known make. An American watch, inspector. Quite in my line. I should like to try a little experiment which may or may not have a result." Taking the timepiece in his hand, he began slowly to wind the stem, his face bent and his lips moving, counting the revolutions.

"Eighteen," I heard him say, "nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven—" he paused, then shook the watch and looked at its face. "As I expected," he said. "This watch has just borne out what was already a conviction. Let me advise you to turn your attention away from the man Ribot, since there seems to be no question that he left London last night from Paddington Station at ten-forty, while the evidence of the coroner will bear me out when I say that Franz Ritz was alive at midnight last night. We must look elsewhere, and after higher game, or else I am greatly mistaken. Meanwhile, Stone, you will aid me materially if you will see that these two despatches go off at once." He sat down at the table and scribbled for a minute, and then handed me two sheets of paper.

"This is to go," he said, "to John Hall Ranney, 26 rue Soufflot, Paris, and the other to R. L. Cardigan, the American Consulate, Vienna."

II

THAT day proved a busy one for Harvey Chase. Half an hour after I had reached his rooms in Morley Hotel, where I was to await him, he came in, but stayed only a few minutes and was gone again till four in the afternoon. Then after reading the two foreign telegrams which I handed to him—evidently replies to his despatches of the morning—he plunged into his bedroom. When he reappeared twenty minutes later his smile

showed that his day's work had been far from fruitless.

"Until I had more data, a great deal more data," he said as he lighted his cigar and leaned back in his armchair, "I was still all in the realm of surmise. Yes, this morning I was largely in the realm of surmise."

The fog of the morning had lifted and the sun had struggled through the clouds and was shining in, flooding the room with light.

"What has already been done," he went on, "had only eliminated the man Ribot so far as the actual murder was concerned. There seemed to be little doubt that it was he whom Mrs. Moss saw slinking out of the house a few minutes past ten last night, and it is certain that he left London by the ten-forty train from Paddington. I had little difficulty in finding the cabman, and he remembered distinctly picking up in Bevin street a fare answering the description I gave him. Of course, I was already convinced that Ribot was quite innocent of the major crime, although he may have minor sins to answer for. So the brief note which I received a little while ago from Inspector Lawson, our sullen friend of this morning, you know, in which he acknowledges that as a result of the coroner's examination he has been obliged to agree with me, is by no means news. Ribot left Bevin street shortly after ten last night. Ritz had been dead between six and seven hours when his body was found by Police Constable Burke this morning. Also the shot that killed him was fired from a distance of from six to eight feet, whereas the police theory is that Ribot crept in the room and shot down at him as he was lying in bed."

"Has it occurred to you," I asked, "that Mrs. Moss may know more than she is inclined to tell?"

"Good. That thought struck me at first. The woman's reputation, as you heard, is none of the best. But I am inclined to believe that in this case she is concealing nothing of importance. Besides, I have questioned her since pretty closely."

"With results?"

"She remembers the impression of hearing a vehicle of some kind stop before her door some time during the night. That in itself, however, was not an unusual occurrence and she naturally attached little importance to it. Besides, it was only an impression. I think we may safely dismiss Mrs. Moss so far as any actual complicity in the case is concerned, and we can dismiss Ribot. But the others—the others!"

"The others?"

"Stone," said Chase, lowering his voice, "Ribot was in that room last night, but he was not the only one. There were at least three others."

"And they were?"

"Ah, if I could tell you that to a certainty there would be an end to the enigma. But I have guessed, and I don't think that I am in danger of being far wrong. There is the bell. It is probably Lawson. He has been interrogating Ribot along a line of questioning which I have indicated. I don't expect very much, but it may be that we shall learn something that will tend to lead us toward the light."

It was the inspector. He bustled in with a very puzzled look on his face, and shook each of us effusively by the hand. "It was the right man," he said. "It was Ribot. When confronted by the bank-notes and letters found in his possession and told of the finding of Ritz's body, he broke down completely and made a full confession."

"What?" cried Chase aghast.

"Oh, he pleads merely to being guilty of robbing his friend, and stoutly denies having had any hand in his murder or knowing anything about it. In fact, when we told him suddenly that Ritz was dead, he went white as a ghost. That's what changed his tactics. Before, he had maintained a stubborn silence, merely protesting against his arrest as an outrage; but when he learned that the charge on which he was being held was that of murder, he gave way completely and professed his willingness to tell all

he knew. In fact, sir," added Lawson, with a crestfallen air, "it seems that you were right and I was wrong. It couldn't have been Ribot; only, in what direction are we to turn now?"

"That is our business to find out," said Chase. "But I suppose you have learned something from Ribot's confession."

"Nothing to throw much light upon the subject. From the man's story, his name is Louis Ribot, forty-three years of age, a native of French Switzerland. At the age of eighteen he went to America, became a naturalized citizen, and remained there until nine or ten years ago. He has been in England seven years, the first four of which he was employed as a teacher of languages in a school in Pentonville. Three years ago the school broke up. He possesses a small annuity in an American company, but has in the main been living on his wits, spending most of his nights in a gambling-hell near the Burlington Arcade. According to his story, his acquaintance with Ritz began only about four months ago. They first met in the Burlington Arcade place, for Ritz also was an incessant gamester, and their acquaintance soon ripened to a certain intimacy. It was at Ritz's suggestion that they took the rooms in Bevin street together. Ribot disclaims any knowledge of the other's antecedents, which is by no means improbable, when you consider the enormous cosmopolitan population of a city like London. He does not even know his nationality, although he supposed him to be a political refugee from somewhere in Eastern Europe. Ribot's explanation of the recent quarrels, which Mrs. Moss overheard, is that they were disputing because Ritz, seemingly in comfortable circumstances, had refused any longer to give financial assistance to his companion, who had been having a run of bad luck at the gambling-table for some weeks. The only serious quarrel that they have had was due to the fact that Ribot opened by mistake a letter addressed to Ritz. Ribot did

not attach much importance to it, but Ritz, when he found it out, burst into a frenzy of fear and anger. He rushed at the other furiously, called him a spy, and attempted to strike him. It was this altercation that Mrs. Moss overheard. A little while later, however, he apologized and attributed his unusual action to overwrought nerves. That was last Tuesday. Ribot accepted the excuse because his companion had been showing signs of extreme mental perturbation. He would start up during the night, and Ribot could hear him call out incessantly during his sleep. In these nightmares he was wandering and unintelligible. All that Ribot could make out were repeated allusions to a stain—Peter's Stain and the Traitor's Stain recurred again and again."

"Curious remarks," suggested Chase, tugging at his mustache.

"Yes, but it probably meant nothing. At least, Ribot paid no attention to it. He himself had troubles of an immediate nature. This week his funds were entirely gone, and he had no way to turn to find the money to satisfy his insatiable love for gaming. Yesterday he and Ritz had their last quarrel upon this score. Ritz was unusually excitable, and treated his companion's demands as trivial. Early in the evening he received a letter, and after reading it gave an excited cry, thrust it in his pocket and rushed from the house without a word. It was then that Ribot, who knew of the package of bank-notes in the safe, conceived the idea of appropriating them to his own use. For a time he struggled against the temptation, but finally gave way, and breaking open the safe, he thrust the package, together with other loose papers, into his pocket, and slipped stealthily out. He was in ample time for the train, but reached Carlisle only to be taken as he descended from his carriage. That is his story, and we have not been able to shake him a bit in his testimony."

"And he said nothing else?" asked Harvey Chase.

"Nothing of importance. Stop! He did mention that he had once heard Ritz addressed by another name. It was by a stranger who came to the Burlington Arcade place. Ritz seemed much excited at the meeting, and led the stranger away, talking to him in a language that Ribot did not understand."

"Did Ribot recall the name?" asked Chase, leaning forward eagerly.

"Yes, it was Poltovas," replied Lawson after some hesitation. "That was it, I think—Poltovas."

Harvey Chase jumped to his feet with a gesticulation of delight.

"I had guessed it," he cried, "I had guessed it. I now hold in my hands all the threads of one of the most extraordinary cases in the history of London crime. Poltovas! Does that name mean nothing to you? What! Nothing? Then let me recommend you to brush yourselves up in the highways and byways of modern European history. I had deduced Poltovas, but had hardly hoped for such immediate good luck. I will show you its significance and convince you that I have not been spending my day in vain. After leaving Bevin street this morning I went to the British Museum, and spent half an hour looking over the files of the *London Times*, with the result that I am able to read you the transcript of a despatch which appeared in that paper. It runs as follows:

"KAROPOLIS, June 3.

"The public degradation of Lieutenant-Colonel Poltovas, recently convicted of selling Ossian army secrets to Illyria just before the outbreak of the recent disastrous Ossia-Illyrian War, took place today in the courtyard of the royal palace. In the presence of a large body of troops and civil and military officials, the galloons were torn from his képi, the trefails from his sleeves, the buttons from his tunic, the numbers from his collar and the stripes from his trousers. His sword was then broken over the knee of a sergeant-major, and the scabbard thrown to the ground. In this state he was made to pass before the regiment which had formerly been under his command. Although apparently terribly agitated, the degraded officer underwent the ordeal with fortitude. When the final words of his degradation had been read out, Lieu-

tenant-Colonel Poltovas cried, in a loud voice, 'I am innocent, soldiers, I am innocent! Wrongfully has the stain been put upon me by some terrible conspiracy of hidden enemies Peter's Stain. My God! Peter's Stain. But I shall know them. I am innocent. I swear it. Long live Ossia!' At this point he was prevented from further protestation. It is understood that Lieutenant-Colonel Poltovas is to be imprisoned in the castle of Drosh. Tonight Karopolis is in a state of excitement. Bands of students and soldiers are parading the streets shouting, 'Death to the traitor!' Before he was charged with the infamous crime of which he has been convicted Poltovas was one of the most highly esteemed officers of the Ossian army. It was under his command that the Ossian lancers made their valiant stand at Brakow, covering the inglorious retreat of King Boris.

"There," said Harvey Chase, "you have a picture of Ritz, or Poltovas, which suggests infinite possibilities. One feature which, however, may seem puzzling to you, is the allusion to the stain. Know, then, that in Ossian army circles there has been since time immemorial a curious ceremony which precedes the formal and public degradation of an officer convicted of treason. After the court-martial has brought in a verdict of 'guilty,' it is customary for the youngest officer among the judges to step forward, fill a goblet with wine, and to dash the contents in the face of the convicted man. This custom is said to have originated late in the eighteenth century, when, at a great banquet, Peter the Second, then occupying the throne, had suddenly started up and flung the wine before him, glass and all, full in the face of one of his generals who, moved by envy and cupidity, was in secret agreement with the Turks to deliver to them the impregnable mountain fortress on which Ossia relied for her independence. This strange ceremony is said to carry with it more shame and humiliation than the public degradation itself. In Ossia they do not speak of an officer as having been convicted of treason; they say that he has received the Traitor's Stain, or Peter's Stain. From later files of the papers you will learn that two years after his incarceration at Drosh, Poltovas succeeded in making his escape, and despite all the

efforts of the Ossian authorities to retake him he passed safely over the frontier. When I add that of recent years several appeals have been made in the Ossian Parliament for a revision of his case on the ground that the *bordereau* on which he was convicted was a forgery, and that there is a strong feeling in many circles that he was the victim of an army conspiracy reaching very high up and designed to shelter at any cost the real traitor—we have a tangle of motives that lifts the affair far beyond the commonplace. Do you begin to see light?"

The inspector and I both had to confess that we did not.

"Have patience," said Chase. "You ask me if I have the complete sequence of events. I reply that I have. But in this case there are complications with which the most complete chain of circumstantial evidence is unable to cope. Tonight, however, I hope to be able to lead you to the end of the trail. Meanwhile, let me show you something else bearing on the affair which is not without interest."

He untied a paper parcel which was lying on the table, and drew therefrom a great damask cloth, which he spread before our eyes. On the edge there was a dull splotch of purple hue, to which Chase pointed.

"What is it?" I asked.

"The stain," he replied, with a smile, "the Traitor's Stain."

III

AT Harvey Chase's request Lawson was to dine with us at Morley's that evening, and he put in his appearance promptly at a few minutes before eight. I alone was there to welcome him, for Chase had gone away about five o'clock, saying that he expected to bring back with him another guest for dinner. When they arrived, soon after eight, this guest proved to be a tall, middle-aged man, whom Chase introduced as Sir Rupert Quentin. The name was very well known to me as that of one who had for years held a position of

high importance in the British Foreign Office and who had been the military attaché at Constantinople at the time of the Turco-Russian War of 1878. After the ice of first formality had been broken Sir Rupert proved to be one of the most affable of companions and the dinner passed off pleasantly without the slightest allusion to the intricate problem that was before us. When the remains of the repast had been cleared away there were cigars and coffee, and the English baronet and Harvey Chase began to talk of affairs in Eastern Europe. It seemed that they had known each other in Constantinople. The inspector and I had little to say, but the time passed rapidly, and when Chase finally suggested that we had other matters to look after it was well past eleven. A brougham was waiting for us at the door, and, in response to whispered directions, the driver lashed his horses and went off in the direction of Hyde Park. Through the window I could see Shaftesbury avenue, Oxford street, Piccadilly, and finally Hyde Park Corner. We turned up Park Lane and then swung into a side street, stopping before a great square house which was brilliantly lighted.

"This is our destination," said Chase, and in a lower voice Sir Rupert added, "The Ossian legation."

We ascended the steps, the great doors were flung back, and by two solemn flunkies in gorgeous livery we were led through a long hall and ushered into a room. As I looked about it seemed as if we had passed in an instant into another century and civilization. The room was an immense one and in its furnishings and atmosphere was far removed from modern England. The walls were of some dark wood and were hung with strange weapons and hunting trophies. On one side there blazed an open wood fire so large that over it one might have roasted an ox. But my glance rested only for an instant on walls and fireplace, and then passed on to the end of the room, where there was a table covered with glasses and decanters filled with wine. Behind the table,

studying us with cold and suspicious silence, were five men.

When the flunkies had withdrawn, closing the door behind them, the man seated in the centre, whom from photographs I had seen in Bond street windows I now recognized as Count Trepoff, the Ossian Minister, rose and bowed gravely to Sir Rupert Quentin.

"As you see, Sir Rupert," he said, "we have acceded to your somewhat unusual request. General Vranja I think you know, also Colonel Brankovitch. This is Colonel Lescovatz, and," he added, after a second's hesitation, "Baron Borka."

The man whom he designated last was seated at his right, and had been watching us closely out of cruel, blinking, bloodshot eyes. His lips were curled into a leer. His was a countenance seamed with the lines of an evil and dissipated life. From the drooping corners of his mouth and his shaking hands it could be seen that he had been drinking heavily.

"I made the request," said Sir Rupert, stepping forward in some embarrassment, "at the request of my friend, Mr. Harvey Chase, of the American service, of whom you have no doubt heard."

"We have heard of Mr. Chase," said the minister stiffly, "but we fail to connect either his personality or his nationality with your request, which we supposed had to do with business of the British Foreign Office."

"On the contrary, it has to do with the murder of Franz Ritz," said Chase sharply.

"That by no means solves the enigma," replied the minister. "I should think that the tracing of a London murder would lead you to the police courts, rather than the Ossian legation."

"We have reason to believe the said Ritz to be an Ossian subject."

"Undoubtedly, there are a number of Ossian subjects in London," answered Count Trepoff imperturbably.

"We have also reason to believe," continued Chase, "that the name Ritz was merely an assumed one, and that

under that alias was concealed the identity of Lieutenant-Colonel Poltovas, formerly of the Ossian army. Now perhaps your excellency begins to see the reason of our visit."

"Not at all," replied the minister. "You say he is Poltovas. Perhaps that is true, but to Ossia Lieutenant-Colonel Poltovas ceased to exist six years ago."

"At the time of his degradation in the courtyard of the royal palace of Karopolis?"

"At the time of his degradation in the courtyard of the royal palace of Karopolis," nodded the minister.

"You realize," said Chase, "that of late there have been expressed grave doubts of his guilt——"

"The honor of her army," replied the minister sternly, "concerns Ossia alone. It is not for foreigners to meddle."

And Baron Borka added, with a harsh laugh, "With traitors Ossia has no concern. Death to the traitors!" With an unsteady hand he raised a glass of brandy to his lips and drained it at a gulp. "Death to the traitors!" he repeated again and again. But I noticed that the others left their glasses untouched.

"Frankly," said Count Trepoff, turning to Sir Rupert, "I must say that I think this matter has gone far enough. Unusual as your request was, we acceded to it because we realized that we are under many obligations to you. This is hardly the channel through which Mr. Chase should pursue his inquiries. Why do you come to us? What has the Ossian legation to do with a murder committed in a London side street?"

"Because," said Chase, in a low voice, "Colonel Poltovas was not murdered in London."

This statement was so astounding that for fully half a minute there was absolute silence.

"What is it that you say?" stammered Trepoff at length.

"I said," repeated Chase gravely, "that Colonel Poltovas was not murdered in London. I say that Colonel

Poltovas was not murdered in England. It is for that reason I come to you, because the laws of England are powerless to deal with and punish his murderer."

The minister started up and leaned halfway over the table. The light of a great fear was shining in his eyes. His lips were white.

"Then in God's name," he whispered, "where was he murdered?"

"In Ossia."

At these extraordinary words I expected a burst of incredulous laughter. But none came. Instead, the faces on the other side of the table were white and drawn, and in the shadow the little, bloodshot eyes of Baron Borka were blinking cruelly and murderously.

"In Ossia," repeated Chase, "in Ossia." His eyes looked from one to another until they rested on the evil countenance of Borka.

"In Ossia!" he cried again, and raised his arm, pointing upward. "For above this house flies the flag of the star and crescent, the royal standard of the Kerapoffs, and Ossia—this is Ossia."

"Lower, in God's name, lower," whispered Trepoff.

"I say that in this room, in the presence of all of you, Colonel Poltovas, once wrongly convicted of having sold the military secrets of Ossia, was done to death. I say that his murderer is the black and foul traitor, who himself sold his country and his army. Do you wish me to call out the name of that traitor and that murderer? You shall have it." He paused and turned to us. "Gentlemen, let me have the honor of introducing you to His Majesty Boris the Fourth, King of Ossia—Ha! Drop it, damn you, drop it, I say!"

For the man whom we had before known as Baron Borka, with a savage oath, had struggled to his feet, and I caught the gleam of a revolver shining in his hand. Trepoff and Vranja were too quick, however, and caught the king's arm, and held it so that he could not use the weapon.

"Your majesty, your majesty," whispered the former, "not that, not that. Think of the terrible consequences. Not again." Vranja with a swift movement whipped away the pistol and flung it across the room. Cursing and twitching, the king sat back in his chair, while the others drew away from him with shame and loathing.

"The spirit of Colonel Poltovas," said Chase, sternly looking down on the royal villain, "the spirit of Colonel Poltovas, foully wronged and foully murdered, cries for vengeance. That vengeance we must leave to Ossia and the Ossian people. Unfortunately for justice, the crime, through the peculiar chain of circumstances, is beyond the pale of British law. For the arm of England does not reach beyond the threshold of this house. Under the conditions, it is perhaps best that the world know nothing of what has been enacted here, and that, so far as the public is concerned, the murder of Ritz simply be added to the long list of unexplained crimes. While I am absolutely certain of the more important facts in the chain of events from the moment when Colonel Poltovas burst into this room last night, laid on the table the indisputable proofs that it was his sovereign and not himself who had sold Ossia to Illyria, and threw the wine into the king's face, until his body was stealthily conveyed back to his room in Bevin street and left there, there are one or two little details lacking. If your excellency will be good enough to supply these, I think Sir Rupert can promise your excellency on behalf of the English authorities the most absolute secrecy."

IV

"THE fatal blunder of the Scotland Yard people," said Harvey Chase as we talked the matter over the next day, "was their allowing their belief in the guilt of Ribot to blind them to evidence that was directly under their eyes.

I, on the other hand, started without any set convictions. You may remember that at our arrival at Bevin street I remained outside for some time; in fact, I had hardly alighted from our four-wheeler before I had seen something that greatly augmented my interest in the case. You know it rained the night before, and that the rain did not begin until some time after Ribot had left London. A glance at the asphalt showed me that a vehicle of some kind had stopped before No. 38 during the night, and to my mind there occurred Mrs. Moss's vague impression. An examination of the wheel marks showed me that it was no hired conveyance, but a private carriage, of which the wheels are farther apart than the usual London public vehicle. Examination of the doorstep and of the room soon showed me that four persons had had access to Ritz's chamber that night. There was needed no great skill to follow their movements. Their footprints were all over the place. But who were they? Why were they there? What were they doing? An examination of the body convinced me that the wound had been inflicted not earlier than midnight, and so Ribot as the actual perpetrator of the crime was at once eliminated. The first real clue was furnished by the slip of paper showing the itinerary. You may remember that I remarked that it was not the itinerary of an ordinary traveler. Schoenbrunn, Viti and Fior are royal palaces, and the average tripper does not spend a fortnight in each. In the rooms I also found several other clues which were of inestimable importance.

"Chief in importance among these was the clue of the watch, a clue which the police had completely ignored. You remember that the hands pointed to twenty minutes past twelve. As, according to the original theory of the police, Ritz was murdered a few minutes before ten, the only way to account for this and at the same time accept their theory, was that the watch had run down and stopped.

But this watch is of a make which I know very well and which is seldom found to vary in a certain respect. When it is completely run down it requires exactly thirty-three complete revolutions to wind it to the full. My experiment carried me to but twenty-seven. When I reached that point I could go no farther. And the added fact that this winding did not start the watch convinced me beyond doubt that its stoppage had been due to some unusual jar which had taken place at twenty minutes past twelve. These are only two of seven distinct clues which the examination of the room furnished me.

"After leaving Bevin street my first step was to test the significance of the itinerary. By looking through the foreign news of the papers of last July I found that between the first and the fifteenth of that month the Austrian Court and a number of notable visitors were at Schoenbrunn. Between July 22d and August 5th King Humbert was entertaining at Viti, and among their guests I found the name of King Boris of Ossia, who had been also at Schoenbrunn earlier in the month. When I traced the king on to Fior there was no longer room for doubt. The last item in the itinerary mentioned Paris, and so I sent a cable of inquiry to Paris and another to Vienna. When from the former reply I learned that three days ago Boris had left Paris and was visiting London incognito, under the title of Baron Borka, I knew that I was hot upon the scent.

"Now, Boris IV. of Ossia is, as you know, one of the most notorious profligates in Europe. Since his accession to the throne he has resorted to every means possible to wring from his subjects the money which he has squandered on actresses and dancers of the Parisian stage. At times his dissipations have gone to such an extreme that even the fast, hard-living men with whom he has associated have turned from him. It is an open secret that he was expelled from the French Jockey Club for an unpardonable and unprintable offense. He hurried his country

into the disastrous war with Illyria, and in the field played the part of a buffoon and a craven. There have been many attempts made to force his abdication, and several abortive revolutions. As a monarch and as a man Boris IV. is far from being an edifying spectacle. In fact, Stone, a more loathsome blackguard never wore a crown.

"Ranney is one of our agents in Paris, and his reply to my telegram of inquiry showed me that Boris was visiting London incognito, and I decided that the chances were very strong that he was staying at the Ossian legation. Had he chosen to go elsewhere it would have been impossible to keep all inkling of his movements out of the papers, for the very notoriety of the man has made him a mark for veiled comment. I made use of one of the brightest of the Scotland Yard men who, slouching about the legation in the dress of a coster, learned of the arrival of a party of six persons three days ago and of the nightly carouses which had not hitherto been a custom of the legation. He also learned at the stables that one of the minister's carriages had been ordered for service at an hour after midnight yesterday morning, and that it had been brought to the door of the Embassy by a confidential Ossian servant, while the English groom usually employed for such work had been strictly warned to remain where he was.

"Meanwhile, I had been able to trace the movements of Ritz after his hasty departure upon receiving the letter at the Bevin street house. They led me to the gambling-den near the Burlington Arcade, and finally, as you will surmise, to the door of the Ossian legation. Stray bits of information I had picked up in the gambling-house, and by putting all the facts together I was able to deduce Poltovas. Then I enlisted the services of Sir Rupert Quentin, who is good enough to consider himself under obligations to me, and through him arranged the meeting that you witnessed. You know that of late there has been much agitation in Karo-

polis for a revision of the Poltovas case, and in certain circles a firm belief that he was made a scapegoat in order to hide the actual traitor. Who that traitor was Poltovas must have known or at least have guessed. He had powerful friends in Ossia who kept him in touch with the march of events. Count Trepoff, who is one of the few upright men in his country's service, tells me that Poltovas learned the name of the real traitor only a few days ago. The minister proved exceedingly tractable in our later conversation, and supplied the few details which I lacked. He himself is broken down with shame over the crime of his sovereign, to whom he was devotedly attached and in whom he had implicit trust, despite his knowledge of the monarch's notorious life. It seems that in some way or other Poltovas obtained admission to the Ossian legation night before last and, entering the room where they all were gathered, accused the king publicly of being the traitor who had sold the Ossian secrets, and picking up a glass of wine, threw it in the king's

face. Before anyone could intervene Boris drew a pistol and shot him dead. Secrecy was absolutely necessary, for the truth would have caused a scandal that would have unsettled Europe and overthrown a dynasty. Trepoff, Leskovatz and Vranja carried the body of the dead man out into a private carriage and conveyed it to Bevin street and placed it on the bed where it was found yesterday morning, purposely overturning the chairs and table in order to give the impression that a struggle had taken place in the room. A good deal of this I was able to deduce from my man's inquiries as he loitered about the legation yesterday in the coster guise. Count Trepoff merely corroborated my deductions."

"And the tablecloth with the wine stain?" I inquired.

"That, also, was one of the fruits of my man's search. He pilfered it from a clothes hamper in the kitchen of the legation. In itself it was of no great importance, but it gave me the opportunity for a dramatic effect. It will serve as a souvenir."



DEGENERACY

MITCHETT—Young McSeedey, who went through the fortune his parents left him, was arrested today for stealing a dollar.

GAUSS—What degeneracy! His father never thought of taking less than a million.



"**D**O you like music?" asked the Brooklyn young man.

"I just love it!" exclaimed the maiden from Chicago. "Mama scolds me dreadfully for spending so much time with my phonograph."

HER EYES

FLOWERS are her garden's eyes;
 They watch for her alone
 Within whose smile there lies
 A beauty like their own:
 Their fragrant lids they ope
 In haste at morn to see
 Her who is all their hope,
 So fair is she!

Stars are her heaven's eyes—
 They watch her while she sleeps,
 Lilies of paradise!
 White pearls in azure deeps!
 For her their glow and gleam
 Throughout the tranquil night,
 Bringing the lovely dream
 For her delight.

Nor flowers nor stars are eyes
 For me. I follow one—
 Her lover—shadow-wise,
 Companion to the sun!
 Her eyes, both flower and star,
 In loveliness outshine:
 Mirrors of Love they are,
 Reflecting mine!

FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN.



NOT SO EASY

PROMOTER—I would advise you to go into it. It's a good thing.
 SINGED—Well, I'm not.



“DO you think that truth is stranger than fiction?”
 “Not since I read the last society novel.”

MRS. MADDEN'S GOLDEN-WEDDING

By Ellis Parker Butler

TIMOTHY MADDEN seated himself carefully on the bench in the small grass-bare park, and his friend Higgins moved over a little to make room for him.

Madden and the shriveled little park harmonized beautifully. He was as small for a man as it was small for a park, and both were dry, and his threadbare clothes were in keeping with the grassless brown sod.

"How's your stomach today?" asked Higgins, not enthusiastically but as one doing his duty.

"Bad!" said Madden. "Bad as possibul, but no worse than always. Higgins, Oi'd be a man—as good a man as annywan—but for this misery in my middle. How's your leg?"

Mr. Madden inquired merely as a matter of form. The Madden stomach and the Higgins leg were always as bad as they could be.

"If 'twas a bit worse," said Higgins, "there'd be a funeral from our house. But it's no worse than common. It's a phaynominal leg, Madden."

"It's a phaynominal stomach I've got," said Madden, with proud woe-fulness. "No man iver had a phay-nominaller. Doc says so hisself. 'Madden,' he says whenever he sees me, 'ain't ye dead yit? I'm s'prised! Wid that phaynominal bad stomach in yez,' he says, 'ye'd ought to been dead long ago.' An' I says to him, 'I ain't dead, doc, but I'm no better than if I was.'"

Higgins listened with impatient attentiveness.

"My doc says," he began as soon as Madden paused, "that if 'twasn't for me ir-ron constytution no drugs in the

worruld wud keep me alive. 'Higgins,' he says to me when I met him last, 'Higgins, no man knows what ye suffer—I don't know; you don't know; nobody knows. The whole medical profession don't know. Your case of rheumytizzum is a thing to be proud of.' That's what doc said."

Madden moved uneasily.

"Yes," he said, "'tis a bad disease, is rheumytizzum. But nothin' like my stomach. The pain," he said, laying his hand over the afflicted member, "is right here. Worruds can never describe what I go through with it, Higgins! Does your leg feel like there was a pin stickin' ut?"

"Just," said Higgins, "a shootin' pin. 'Tis like a pin that shoots around from knee to toe and back."

"I can believe ut," sympathized the wily Madden, "an' one pin shootin' round that way is bad, but the feelin' I have in me middle is like—like a whole pincusshin o' pins. One of these red tomaty-shaped pincusshins, Higgins, wid the pins stuck in wrong-end-to—heads in, points out. Sixty hundred pins, Higgins, wid the points projeckin' from the top an' bottom an' sides o' the tomaty-shaped cusschin. An' ivery pin het red-hot!"

Higgins looked at Madden's drawn white face enviously. He thought he would try to do his own pains wordy justice, but on consideration he felt that he was no match for Madden that day.

"How's the leddy?" he asked, to change the topic. "Still doin' well?"

The ladies of Madden and Higgins were the heads of their houses, and rival houses they were, for they were competing boarding-houses, face to

face across the small park. Occasionally the ladies met at the market, but their neutrality was only apparent, and the thin disguise of chat about the rising price of leg of lamb or the poor quality of modern potatoes was but a veil to cover their contemptuous dislike for each other—a dislike that always showed itself at the close of each chat in a polite “How is Mr. Madden?” or, “Is Mr. Higgins well today?” This was the stab vicious, for the incompetences of Mr. Higgins and Mr. Madden were the thorns that rankled in the flesh of their respective “leddies.”

There was no question that the men were honest invalids. They were physically incapable of any but the most trifling labor, but, as often happens when the woman becomes the provider and mainstay of the family, the men fall into a state of absolute insignificance in their own families and, for mere lack of self-assertiveness, become nothing, or less than nothing.

In Mr. Madden's case the insignificance was increased because he had been poor when he married, and Mrs. Madden had by her own ability amassed a comfortable small fortune, while extending her acquaintance and raising her social position. As she rose Madden fell—at least, by contrast—and in a boarding-house the invalid husband soon becomes a matter of indifference. First the wife sees, rightly, that she is more important; then she feels that the cook is more important than her husband; and finally there is not a boarder or servant that is less important than the man, and everyone in the house feels it. Sometimes the man loses his self-respect; more often he nourishes in secret a respect for his disease, and becomes negatively proud of his symptoms.

Mrs. Madden had kept a boarding-house so long that it had been years since she had taken any account of her husband. Not that she was unkind, but, the house being full once, she had needed his place at the table, and it had never occurred to her to

replace him, even when boarders were few; and he always ate with the servants. Another time when a splendid price was offered for their own room by a transient, Mrs. Madden had temporarily taken a single bed in a hall bedroom and sent Madden to a bed in the attic. When the transient left Mrs. Madden went back to her big, easy bed—the best in the house—but Madden, somehow, remained in the attic.

Madden admired his “leddy” immensely. He was proud of her success, of her silk dresses and real amethysts, and, knowing that he was of little use, he kept out of her way, and out of the way of the boarders and servants, and was pretty generally forgotten. With the growth of her business—it now required two houses—and the unending care of management, Mrs. Madden was too busy to remember Madden, except most casually, as when he happened to be at hand and an errand needed running. At such time he was but an errand-boy—at other times she might quite rationally have called him “My late husband.” In fact, the new boarders usually imagined Mrs. Madden a widow until the truth came out casually.

Every evening during the winter Mrs. Madden's two large rooms were the favorite resort of her boarders. On week nights they dropped in for a game of euchre; on Sunday evenings to chat or have a little music; but Mr. Madden sat in the basement. Usually he sat in the dining-room, but if the servants had company he retired to the kitchen. At nine o'clock he climbed up three flights and went to bed.

There were things in Mrs. Madden's boarding-house, as in all boarding-houses, that were handed down from old boarder to new boarder, so that facts and gossip were thus carried along for years. One of these things was Mrs. Madden's age, and every new boarder on learning it for the first time was surprised. It came to be a custom of the house to surprise new boarders by telling them Mrs. Mad-

den's age. She was sixty-eight. She looked forty.

Madden's age no one cared to know. He was seventy-one, and looked anywhere between sixty and seventy-five.

"How's the leddy?" asked Higgins as the two men sat in the park. "Still doin' well?"

"The house is full," said Madden. "Business is good. I've not seen the leddy the week, but I expect she's in good health or I'd be hearin' of ut. She's a wonnerful woman, Higgins."

"She is so!" admitted Higgins. "Wonnerful spry for her age."

"Not one o' the boarders can they git to believe how old she is, Katy tells me," said Madden proudly, "until she says it herself. Sixty-eight, Higgins."

"Think o' that now!" said Higgins. "She be gittin' on, Madden. Lemme see, how old was it you was, Madden?"

"Sivinty-wan," said Madden. "An' I feel ut! Sivinty-wan! I'm a different man to whut I was when I was married, Higgins. Lemme see—that was—that was—forty-siven, forty-eight, forty-nine— Well!"

He stopped and nodded his head slowly, and a pleased smile spread over his face.

"Tubby sure!" he said slowly. "Tubby sure! 'Tis a wonder I didn't think of ut!"

"What?" inquired Higgins.

"The party," said Madden, much pleased. "Maggie the cook says last night the leddy was gettin' up a party for tomorry night. No end of cakes an' ice cream an' a cold turkey to cook an' what all. She was kickin' over the extry work, was Maggie. 'Twas how she came to tell me. 'Tis fine companionship the girls is to me, Higgins, of an evenin'. I learn all that's doin'."

"I find it so myself," said Higgins. "We have no complaint of bein' lonely, Madden."

"No," agreed Madden. "'Tis a good enough life, but for stomachs an' legs. Never a word has the leddy said agin my settin' in the dinin'-room after

dinner's over. She's a good woman, Higgins."

"She is so," said Higgins. "So's mine. But the party——"

"Yes, the party!" Madden repeated. "Thinks I now, what is the leddy givin' a party for annyhow? 'Tis many a year since she give a party. But not for the sowl of me could I think why she sh'u'd be givin' one now."

He stopped and chuckled.

"Well, why?" asked Higgins.

Madden turned to him and laid a hand on the knee. Higgins winced, but said nothing.

"'Tis her golden-weddin'!" said Madden proudly. "She's been married fifty year come tomorrow night. That's why she's havin' the party, Higgins!"

"Fifty year!" said Higgins slowly. "'Tis a long time."

"Long time!" cried Madden. "You may say so, Higgins! Ut is a long time! 'Tis a half a cent'ry, Higgins! Not many women live to give a golden-weddin' party, I tell ye! But, pshaw! 'tis a wonnerful woman Missus Madden is. 'Tis whut I wud expect from her. Look at the business she's built up, Higgins. Look how respectid she is! She's a grand woman, a good woman, a great woman, Higgins. I'm proud to be the husband of her."

"You sh'u'd be!" agreed Higgins.

"Higgins," he said a moment later, "whin I think of how I come to this country a raw country lad, with niver a dollar to me name, I can't believe ut! To think that me, Dennis Madden, sh'u'd be one of a family that has a woman that's celebratin' her golden-weddin'! Oh, it takes the leddies to do ut! You nor me, Higgins, if we lived to be a thousand, wud never have a golden-weddin'! 'Tain't in us! Not," he added, "but what we might but for our sickness. 'Tis handicapped we are, Higgins, with these stomachs and legs and one thing and another."

He rose.

"What you be goin' to do?" asked Higgins, who was supremely comfortable in the warm sunshine.

"Mebby I can help in the kitchen

some," said Madden; "they be fearful busy the day."

The next day, as he carried the garbage pail to the edge of the walk before the boarding-house, he spied Higgins in the park. He was very busy. The party, it seemed, was to be a very big affair, and the cook found much in which he could be useful; but he could not resist the temptation to stroll over and give Higgins some idea of the grandeur.

"There be palms by the dozen in the parlors," he said as soon as within speaking distance.

"I see them goin' in," said Higgins.

"Forty-eight extry chairs the ledgy had to rent from the undytaker," cried Madden excitedly.

"I counted them as they went in," said Higgins.

"One hundred invites was sent out!" Madden announced proudly.

"My ledgy got one of them," said Higgins.

"'Tis goin' to be a grand blowin' out," Madden said.

"So your Maggie told our Bridget," said Higgins.

Madden was disappointed. He had hoped that Higgins would be overwhelmed. Instead he took it coolly; but, of course, it was not his wife who was having a golden-wedding.

Madden played his trump card as he left.

"I can't stop with ye now," he said; "I'm wanted. They've slathers o' work for me to do in the kitchen, an' annyhow, I don't want to miss hearin' what's goin' on."

Higgins was thoroughly envious.

In the kitchen Madden reveled in a sense of importance so great that he almost forgot his chronic pains. He had potatoes to peel and the cold turkey to slice, and as he listened to the chatter of the servants he felt quite a part of the party. He heard all the arrangements discussed and the names of all those who had been invited. Madden was enjoying himself hugely.

At four in the afternoon he again appeared at the basement door and peered anxiously toward the park. Higgins was not sitting on the accustomed bench, and Madden was about to return into the house when he spied Higgins at the far end of the park sitting with his back resolutely turned toward the Madden boarding-house.

Madden crossed the street and walked to where Higgins was seated. His eyes glowed, but he tried to keep himself well in hand, and he sank on the bench beside Higgins as carefully as had been his custom for years. Higgins looked at him suspiciously.

"How's the grand tomfoolery gettin' on?" he asked cruelly.

"The divil take ye fer that, Pat Higgins!" Madden cried. "Tomfoolery! Isn't it proper that a ledgy sh'u'd celybrate her golden-weddin' proper? Do ye want me to stop assocyatin' wid ye altogether, or what?"

Higgins put out his hand, for Madden had partly arisen from his seat.

"I take it back, Dennis!" he said. "'Tis jealous I was, an' me leg uncommon bad the day. Your ledgy has good right to celybrate."

Madden grasped his friend's hand in both his own thin hands and squeezed it. There were tears in his eyes, and his lip trembled.

"Pat," he said, "you've a good wife an' a fair one an' a kind one; but what do you think my ledgy's done?"

"Not wine for the party?" Higgins asked excitedly.

"I dunno!" said Madden, as if wine would be as nothing compared to what he had to tell. "'Tis wonnerful how good the ledgy is! There's a heart for ye, Pat Higgins! What *do* ye think she's done?"

"I dunno!" said Higgins helplessly. "What is ut?"

Madden smiled triumphantly.

"Pat," he almost whispered, "she's invited me to her golden-weddin' party!"



“REPAIRS”

By Edwin L. Sabin

HEIGH-HO! 'twas a dandy motor-car;
“Cheap running,” it—a duck!
We hastened out for a gladsome spin,
And soon the blamed thing stuck.
We hauled it down to a busy shop;
They diagnosed its case:
“It’s sparkin’ wrong.” So we left it there,
And this is what took place:

Oh, the items read: “One magneto,
Fixing of doodad-jack,
Removing the after starboard chain,
Putting of same chain back,
Filling of tank with gasolene,
Watching it leak away,
Finding of leak in aforesaid tank,
Soldering same O. K.”

Then ready again we started forth
The boulevards to speed;
But sudden, when halfway up a hill,
Once more stopped short our steed.
We hauled it back to the busy shop;
“Bent cylinder,” the word.
We left it there, to return “next week——”
And this is what occurred:

Oh, the story ran: “New cylinders,
Tightening here and there,
Making the air-compressor press,
Furnishing same with air,
Oiling an oily oiler up,
Cleaning of same from rust,
Testing of dustpan (sixteen hours),
Furnishing same with dust.”

And we clambered in, all shipshape sure
That shopman did aver;
But over the threshold, deeply worn,
That car refused to stir.
“The battery now seems out of whack;
Best leave it yet, a bit.”
So we trudged away, and this is what
We learned, “next week,” to wit:

THE SMART SET

Oh, the old, old song: "New battery,
 Doping the puddin' tame,
 Disconnecting connecting rods,
 Connecting again of same,
 Changing the air in all the tires,
 Viewing the motor mote,
 Stabling the horse-pow'r (twenty-four),
 Feed, a dollar an oat."

"The cheapest car that there is to *run!*"
 As ad-line sounds tiptop;
 But they ought to say, in a general way,
 How much it costs to *stop!*



ONLY THE BEGINNING

"WOULD you advise me to marry him, mama? He isn't a nobleman, but
 he has lots of money."
 "Why not, my daughter? You know you must begin at the foot of the
 ladder."



ROYALTIES AHEAD

CLARA—What kind of letters does he write?
 MAUD—The most foolish I ever read.
 "Then keep them for publication. He may be prominent *some day.*"



GIDDY

MAY—Chollie is awfully giddy.
 BELLE—No wonder. Every pretty girl turns his head.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SMALL-TALK

By Douglas Story

IT may be that the philosopher who wrote "Silence is golden" was justified of his writing; but in society speech is the only currency. Small-talk is the small change of everyday existence. It smooths one's walk through life, makes introductions easy, bespeaks the confidence of men, opens the way to the hearts of women. It buys the interest of those who otherwise would remain apart. Just as the chance shilling judiciously applied will secure for the mean man the reputation of generosity, so the proper phrase glibly inserted will gain for the mediocre mind the merit of intelligence. No man can afford to travel without a pocketful of *bakshish*—small coin to lubricate the joints of listless servants. No man may dare to enter society without a store of ready conversation—topical observations which insure the attention of laggard listeners. Neither title nor wealth nor genius will avail aught if the possessor has not the ability to speak easily upon those subjects that most interest society. Talk is the *Trinkgeld* of social intercourse.

But, just as the copper coin of one's desultory charity must bear the stamp of the country in which it is dispensed, so must one's table-talk be suited to the society in which it is passed. The same remark will be accounted witty in Paris which in London would be deemed banal, in Berlin frivolous, in New York irrelevant. One must fit one's conversation to one's company as one would adapt one's clothes or one's language. It were as absurd to talk stocks at a Paris dinner-table as to

address one's neighbor in Chinese at a function in Mayfair.

The cosmopolitan early learns the necessity of being all things to all men in conversation as in conduct. He must master the intricacies of international chit-chat if he is to earn the world's stamp of culture, to graduate in the universal Ten Thousand. The king knows that his popularity, sometimes his very existence, depends upon his ability to remember names and faces. Assiduously he cultivates his memory, stations trusty adherents where privily they may prompt him. The diplomat recognizes that he must ever be in touch with the smallest happenings in the circle about him, if he is to succeed in his mission. So it is that Kaiser Wilhelm sends sympathetic messages to the President, when he learns that Mr. Roosevelt's schoolboy son has caught a cold. So it is that Mr. Chamberlain accompanies a warlike despatch to the Transvaal Government with tender inquiries after the health of Mrs. Kruger. These constitute the *savoir faire* in the great world of politics. The well-bred man knows that, if he is to escape the imputation of barbarism, or—which is worse—of boredom, he must talk in Rome as the Romans talk, converse in Cathay after the manner of the Cathayians, whisper nothings in the Newport maiden's ear according to the nothingness of Newport. Else is he no true member of a properly constituted society, but a parvenu, a provincial, a person to be indulgently treated for his inadequacies, or sternly excommunicated for his *bêtises*. Such men

hold their stock of *tripotage* as of greater value than their capital of money, and cultivate it accordingly. Major Pendennis, man of the world, owed his place in society solely to his knowledge of the *Almanach de Gotha* and his ability to recite its details in an entertaining manner. Richer men, wiser men, younger men, more distinguished men knocked in vain at the door of Gaunt House. Major Pendennis carried his welcome in his fund of small-talk.

Table-talk need not necessarily be gossip. The experienced diner-out avoids personal reference in a company that is new to him. If he be a stranger in a strange land the opportunity is withheld from him. He must converse on those topics which are recognized in the community in which he finds himself. If he be a man of the world, he will know the trend of a nation's thought as he will master the disposition of its railroads. He studies it as the essential preliminary to his introduction to its life. He has learned that the man who is a hero on the plains is a yokel on Fifth avenue. He has heard the leader of the season's cotillion called a duffer in a Spanish fandango. He has seen the exquisite of Piccadilly laughed to scorn on a provincial pavement. He has learned that good form, like morality, is altogether a matter of environment, and if he be wise, he has profited by the experience.

The fact is, no man may pride himself on his propriety who has not schooled himself in half a dozen of the great cities of the world. One eats fish after the entrée in Genoa, and to express surprise were as much a social *faux pas* as to eat fish with merely a fork in London, or to carry one's knife throughout a course in New York. No person is more at fault in one metropolis than the rigid expositor of society's laws in an alien capital. The principal of a Boston boarding-school were a peasant in Peking.

The provincial speaks to interest himself, the cosmopolitan talks to interest his neighbor. The more per-

fect the culture of any society, the wider will be the range of topics included in its small-talk. It is an un-failing standard whereby to measure the refinement of a people. Society is known by its small-talk. The man of the village shrinks from the table-talk of the rural community, its petty details of cows, and grass, and harvests. The man of the town shuns the chatter of the village, the gossip of the parson and the judge. The citizen shrugs his shoulders at the municipal politics of the townsman, and the metropolitan abhors the business interests of the man of the city of factories. The wider the horizon, the more general the conversation.

True as is this axiom of chit-chat, there is a curious local influence at work upon the choice of subjects at table. In New York the weather, the theatre, the movement of Fifth avenue are always with us. More of business is talked at the dinner-table in New York than in any other of the great cities of the world. Wall Street casts its shadow over the avenues. Women discuss stocks as in Paris they criticize a poem, or in Berlin rhapsodize over the "Rheingold." In Boston the costumes at the opera are replaced as matter of conversation by the classical in music. Beethoven is substituted for Wagner, Mozart takes the place of de Koven. In Boston, too, is more talk of the serious things in politics than elsewhere in the United States. In Washington the topic is the man, in Boston the policy. In Washington one speaks of the rival ambitions of politicians, of candidates and intrigues. In Boston one meditates on the purpose of the Constitution, upon the rights of Filipino rebels, upon humanitarian principles in government. The freshly introduced cosmopolitan had best be a philosopher in Boston. And yet of all the cities of the United States one finds most use for his general culture in the neighborhood of the hub of the universe.

In Chicago is much talk of dress among the women and an unexpected interest in things literary. As though

in protest against the materialism of its existence, Chicago loves to patronize letters. It is the paradise of the minor poet. It glories in autographed copies, in morocco-bound editions, in esthetic monstrosities. Its men are deep students of all modern movements in sociology. It is impossible to prognosticate the subject of conversation at a Chicago table. The town is too young, its inhabitants too worldwide in their origin to yield a local significance. Subjects are chosen from the whole granary of knowledge, discussed with the whole gamut of emotions. One thing alone is distinctive, a nervous desire to acquire knowledge, a sturdy decisiveness of opinion. Tomorrow, or the next day, Chicago will have given birth to a school of philosophy. Today she is busy sifting the philosophies of others.

St. Louis has a German interest in foreign policy, speaks dogmatically upon questions of tariff and international affairs, has a special concern in the interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. At Baltimore one may talk pictures and be understood. At Philadelphia conversation is more on a par with the English table-talk of eighty years ago than elsewhere in America. Sport is a safe topic after the soup—not the sport of the one-cent newspapers, but sport as our grandfathers before the War understood it, as the English understand it today. The girls play golf and tennis, the young men maintain the ancient game of cricket; the oldsters ride and hunt and shoot. It may be, the statistician will confute me with the figures of Chicago and Boston and New York. They will not influence my statement. Sport is no matter of record. It is the inborn love of exercise, of healthy emulation. In Philadelphia, more than elsewhere, one finds the appreciation of athletics raised to the dignity of dinner-talk.

Newport has no right to a place within the catalogue of cities. Its manners are the manners of Deauville and Homburg, of Nice and Naples.

But it is a metropolis of dinners, and one must be prepared to speak the language of Newport from the moment he unfolds his napkin. The distinction of Newport rests in the absence of the responsible men of the nation from its cottage hospitality. One meets there the wives and the children, the callow and the gray-headed men of leisure of Fifth avenue, the diplomats from Washington, the foreigners provided with introductions. These are the inhabitants of Newport in the season. The strong men of the country are in Wall Street or in Homestead, on the ocean or in the mountains. As a consequence the table-talk of Newport differs from that of any of its cities of origin. The Pittsburg native forgets iron, and the New Yorker is ignorant of stocks in Newport. One chatters of polo and automobiles, of the latest marriage and the coming scandal. It is as though one sat at Monte Carlo or Baden. The masculine element of the New York or Chicago table is absent, and the talk takes its color from the women—of dresses, equipages, the accustomed chit-chat of the boudoir. Yet is the small-talk of Newport more European than elsewhere in America, more concerned with the doings of duchesses and the peregrinations of princesses. The man of the world needs little schooling to interest his neighbor in Newport.

It is strangely different with Pittsburg. There exists a superstition in the United States that Pittsburg is the ugliest city in the country. So confident has been the assertion that even the poor dwellers therein have grown to believe the libel, so that today there is not one photographic view of the city to be obtained in any store in town. From his landing the British alien is mockingly advised to visit Smoky City if he would revive memories of his native fogs and soot showers. He is taught to believe in a dirtier Sheffield, a more disagreeable Glasgow. But Pittsburg is not an ugly city. It is one of the most picturesque towns of the United

States. It is not clean, but neither is Naples.

It is a town of sudden hillocks, of hecks and hows, with no straight lines and scarce a level hundred yards in its entirety. Its grades are accidental, natural, built up of its smokestacks and its primal topsyturvydom. No Swiss chalet ever perched more confidently on the moraine of a glacier than do those Pittsburg houses on their khaki-colored kopjes. Each corner brings a new surprise, and every street is a long succession of corners. Were they grass-green instead of grimy, Pittsburg might rank with the famous beauty spots of Switzerland, Norway and the Rhine.

Like Aden, Pittsburg gains in beauty with the nightfall. Then the sloppy streets, the dusty turf, the refuse heaps and the awful advertisement boards are hidden from sight, and the lights gleam out at amazing angles above, below and all around one. House lamps dangle like Chinese lanterns straight above one, blast furnaces belch forth their ruddy spume beneath one's very feet. Climbing impossible inclines, the electric cars gleam like glowworms, and down by the river's edge the steel works glitter as a witches' carnival. It is an orgy of light, and those who have once seen it will never again call Pittsburg ugly.

The smoke Pittsburg undoubtedly has, in an artistic sense, aids it materially. It gives to the view the haze artists love, which to the inhabitant of the clear-eyed East is unobtainable. In the Atlantic States the brilliant day seeks out every detail to the horizon. There is no shade, no distance. The landscape is a chromograph, hard, brittle. In Pittsburg distances are mellowed, the jagged ends of vistas are molded off in the smoky blackness and everything is idealized.

One may stand in the Carnegie Art Gallery before a painting, the work of a Pittsburg boy. It is full of tone, of atmosphere. No artist from the garish East could have painted it,

lacking the Pittsburger's appreciation of hazy softness. The best of American art has been in sculpture and in portraiture, and has been evidenced in Europe. The clear brilliancy of the typical American day is destructive of art, and men with the instinct must seek refuge in other lands if it would find expression. Pittsburg is probably the last city in the United States one would designate as a nursery of artists, and yet it has put forth its due crop of painters. There are higher qualities in smoke than the merely utilitarian mind has compassed.

So it is that in Pittsburg one may speak of other things than iron and steel rails. One's neighbor dilates upon pictures, and the man across the table is busy with the technic of music. It may be the phrasing is crude and inelegant, but the appreciation and the understanding are there. Pittsburg differs from Boston in that it loves music; Boston patronizes music.

In Europe small-talk varies with locality as much as here in the United States. In London the conversation is much of boats and horses and matches at cricket, at golf, at rowing and racing. The cultured Englishman is invariably a sportsman.

Paris loves opportunity for wit, will sacrifice principle, consistency, good taste in order to score in the *jeu de mots*. Subject matter changes rapidly as a kaleidoscope, the manipulators following each instant the latest combination of ideas. Nowhere in the world is conversation so much enjoyed as in Paris, nowhere is it more assiduously cultivated. The Englishman sits long over his dinner because he appreciates the claret and the port. The German lingers lovingly over his salads and his vegetables. The American rushes away to his waiting work. The Italian eats rapidly and nervously, pursued to a conclusion by his acrid wine. The Frenchman deems his dinner an occasion for brilliance, for the giving and taking of ideas, for the sharpening of his intellect. Frenchmen hate to dine alone, Germans pay little heed to their

neighbors, Americans regard their meals as an obnoxious interruption. In Paris the topic of conversation is the *monde*.

In Berlin one feeds heavily, discourses upon philosophy and the *leit-motifs* of the Ring. One needs a university degree to take his place at a German dinner-table.

In Rome one must be careful to ascertain the "color" of the hostess, must confine oneself largely to religion or to the growth of young Italy according to her political bias. If she be "White" one may converse safely on the races, the opera at Milan and Naples, the movement of the Court at Rome. If she be "Black," one speaks of the decay of the old families, the modern generation of upstarts, the dead glories of the Eternal City. In Rome silence is a safeguard.

In St. Petersburg one feeds off *zakouska*, delicate *hors d'œuvres*, tempting to scandal, to whispered gossip of the love affairs of grand dukes and the attachments of the dancers at the opera. Politics and the war bray all too obtrusively outside to be permissible in the dining-room. Discretion is banished by potent libations of *vodka* before seats are occupied at table, and conversation is more coarsely primitive than in the capital of any other of the Great Powers. Talk of music and the

belles-lettres is sandwiched between outspoken revelations of the flirtations of a princess and the jealousies of a *première danseuse*. One needs must have a strong stomach in Russia and a discriminating digestion if he is to succeed as a guest at the tables of the *beau monde*.

In Peking table-talk is strictly delimited by custom, carefully adjusted to the contrasting ranks of entertained and entertaining. A dinner-table solecism may cost a man his head in China. In Tokio a gentler etiquette prevails. The talk is of the graces of the geishas, of the weaving of the dance tapestries. One must be an adept at the fine distinctions of "Augustness" and "Highness" and "Most Excellent and Honorable Lord," if one is to receive the *cachet* of breeding in Japan.

And so one returns to the realization that small-talk is the small change of everyday existence. One may write theses on the hieroglyphics of the Nile, may understand the hidden things in development, may know the constituents of every star in the empyrean, they will not avail so much as a store of ready conversation to open the hearts of men. Knowledge is a million-dollar bank-note, difficult to circulate; small-talk is a fistful of silver, always understood, invariably welcome—the universal currency of cultivation.



POOR MAN!

MRS. LECTOOR—Do you know that you talk in your sleep?
LECTOOR—Well, it's the only chance I get.



LIES make almost as much trouble in this world as telling the truth.

NIGHT

THE night is old, and all the world
 Is wearied out with strife;
 A long gray mist lies heavy and wan
 Above the house of life.

Four stars burn up and are unquelled
 By the low, shrunken moon;
 Her spirit draws her down and down—
 She shall be buried soon.

There is a sound that is no sound,
 Yet fine it falls and clear,
 The whisper of the spinning earth
 To the tranced atmosphere.

An odor lives where once was air,
 A strange, unearthly scent,
 From the burning of the four great stars
 Within the firmament.

The universe, deathless and old,
 Breathes, yet is void of breath:
 As still as death that seems to move
 And yet is still as death.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT.



A MODERN NOVEL

“HOW is this book?”
 “Oh, worth skipping.”



QUIGGER—While I was eating luncheon in a New York hotel the other day my P. D. Q. stock dropped off ten points.
 TRIGGER—That was almost as expensive as the luncheon, wasn't it?

THE TRAGIC WALL

By James Huneker

THE DARK POOL

IT was not so high, the wall, as massive; not so old as moss-covered.

After Rudolph Côt, the painter, had achieved celebrity with his historical canvas, "The Death of the Antique World," now in the Louvre, he bought the estate of Chalfontaine, which lies at the junction of two highroads: one leading to Ecouen, the other to Villiers-le-Bel.

Almost touching the end of the park on the Ecouen side there is a little lake, hardly larger than a pool, and because of its melancholy aspect—sorrowful willows hem it about, drooping into stagnant waters—Monsieur Côt had christened the spot "The Dark Tarn of Auber." He was a fanatical lover of Poe, reading him in the Baudelaire translation and openly avowing his preference for the French version of the great American's tales. That he could speak only five words of English did not deter his associates from considering him a profound critic of literature.

After his death his property and invested wealth passed into the hands of his youthful widow, a charming lady, a native of Burgundy, and—if gossip did not lie—a former model of the artist; indeed, some went so far as to assert that her face could be seen in her late husband's masterpiece—the figure of a young Greek slave attired as a joyous bacchante. But her friends always denied this. Her dignified bearing, sincere sorrow for her dead husband, and her motherly solici-

tude for her daughter, left no doubt as to the value of all petty talk.

It was her custom of summer evenings to walk to the pool, and with her daughter Berenice she would sit on the broad wall and watch the moon rise, or acknowledge the respectful salutations of the country folk with their bran-speckled faces.

In those days Villiers-le-Bel was a dull town about a half-hour from Paris on the Northern Railway, and two miles from the station.

The widow was not long without offers. Her usual answer was to point out the tiny Berenice, playing in the garden with her nurse. Then a landscape painter, one of the Barbizon group, appeared, and as a former associate of Rudolph Côt and a man of means and position, his suit was successful. To the astonishment of Villiers-le-Bel Madame Elaine Côt became Madame Théophile Mineur; on the day of the wedding little Berenice—named after a particularly uncanny heroine of Poe's by his relentless admirer—scratched the long features of her stepfather. The entire town accepted this as a distressing omen, and it was not deceived; Berenice Côt grew up a determined young lady whose mother weakly endured her tyranny, whose new father secretly feared her.

At the age of eighteen she had refused nearly all the young painters between Ecouen and Domaine de Vallières; had spent several summers in England and four years at a Lausanne school. She feared neither man nor mouse, and once, when she saw a

famous Polish pianist walking on his terrace at Morges, she took him by the hand, asked for a lock of his hair, and was not refused by the amiable virtuoso. After that Berenice was the acknowledged leader of her class. The teachers trembled before her sparkling, wrathful black eyes.

At home she ruled the household, and as she was an heiress no one dared to contradict her. Her contempt for her stepfather was only matched by her impatience in the company of young men. She pretended—so her intimates said—to loathe them. “Frivolous idiot” was her mildest form of reproof when an ambitious boy would trench upon her pet art theories or attempt to flirt. She called her mother “the lamb” and her stepfather “the parrot”—he had a long curved nose. Altogether she was very unlike the pattern French girl. Her favorite lounging-place was the wall, and after she had draped it with a scarlet shawl and perched herself upon it she was only too happy to worry any unfortunate man who presented himself.

The night Hubert Falcroft called at Chalfontaine Mademoiselle Elise Evergonde told him that her cousin, Madame Mineur, and Berenice had gone in the direction of the pool. He had walked over from the station, preferring the open air to the stuffy tram. So a few vigorous steps brought to his view mother and daughter as they slowly moved, encircling each other's waist. The painter paused and noted the general loveliness of the picture; the setting sun had splashed the blue basin overhead with delicate pinks, and in the fretted edges of some high floating cloud-fleece there was a glint of fire. The smooth grass parquet swept gracefully to the semicircle of dark green trees, against the foliage of which the virginal white of the gowns was transposed into an ivory tone by the blue and green keys of sky and forest.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed; “paint in the foreground a few peacocks languidly dragging their gorgeous tails,

and you have a Watteau or a Fragonard—no, a Monticelli. Only, Monticelli would have made the peacocks the central motive, with the women and trees as an arabesque.”

He was a portraitist who solemnly believed in the principle of decoration—character must take its chances when he painted. Falcroft was successful with women's heads, which he was fond of depicting in misty shadows framed by luxurious accessories. They called him the “Master of Chiffon” at Julien's; but when he threw overboard his old friends and joined the new crowd their indignation was great. His title now was the “Ribbon Impressionist,” and at the last Salon of the Independents Falcroft had the mortification of seeing a battalion of his former companions at anchor in front of his picture, “The Lady with the Cat,” which they reviled for at least an hour. He was an American who had lived his life long in France, and only showed race in his nervous, brilliant technic and his fondness for bizarre subjects.

He had not stood many minutes when a young voice saluted him:

“Ah, Monsieur Falcroft! Come, come quickly, mama is delighted to see you!”

His mental picture was decomposed by the repeated waving of the famous shawl, which only came into view as Berenice turned. Hubert regretted that she had not worn it—the peacocks could have been exchanged for its vivid note of scarlet. Pretending not to have heard her speech, he gravely saluted the mother and daughter. But Berenice was unabashed.

“Mama was wondering if you would visit us tonight, Monsieur Falcroft, when I saw you staring at us as if we were ghosts.” A burst of malicious laughter followed.

“Berenice, Berenice,” remonstrated her mother, “when will you cease such tasteless remarks?” She blushed in her pretty, matronly fashion and put her hand on her daughter's mouth.

“Don't mind her, Madame Mineur! I like to meet a French girl with a little

unconventionality. Berenice reminds me now of an English girl——”

“Or one of your own country-women,” interrupted Berenice. “And please, *Miss*, after this; I am a grown young lady.”

He joined in the merriment. She was not to be resisted, and he wished—no, he did not wish—but he thought that if he were younger what gay days he might have. Yet he admired her mother much more. Valerie Côt-Mineur was an old-fashioned woman, gentle, reserved and at the age when her beauty had a rare autumnal quality—the very apex of its perfection—in a few years, in a year, perhaps, the change would come and crabbed winter set in.

He particularly admired the oval of her face, her soft, brown eyes and the harmonious contour of her head. He saw her instantly with a painter’s imagination—filmy lace would modulate about her head like a dreamy aureole; across her figure a scarf of yellow silk; in her hands he would paint a crystal vase, and in the vase one rose with a heart of sulphur. And her eyes would gaze as if she saw the symbol of her age—the days slipping away like ropes of sand from her grasp. He could make a fascinating portrait, he thought, and he said so. Instantly another peal of irritating laughter came from Berenice.

“Don’t tell papa. He is *so* jealous of the portrait he tried to make of mama last summer. You never saw it? It’s awful! It’s hid away behind a lot of canvases in the atelier. It looks like a Cézanne still life. I’ll show it to you some time.”

Her mother revealed annoyance by compressing her lips. Falcroft said nothing. They had skirted the pool in single file, for the path was narrow and the denseness of the trees caused partial obscurity. When they reached the wall the moon was rising in the eastern sky.

“*L’heure exquise*,” murmured Madame Mineur.

Berenice wandered down the road, and Hubert helped her mother to the

wall, where he sat beside her and looked at her.

He was a big, muscular man with shaven cheeks, dark eyes and plenty of tumbled hair, in which flecks of gray were showing. He had been a classmate of Théophile Mineur, for whose talents or personality he had never betrayed much liking. But one day at a *déjeuner*, which had prolonged itself until evening, Mineur insisted on his old friend—the Burgundy was old, too—accompanying him to Villiers-le-Bel, and not without a motive. He knew Falcroft to be rich, and he would not be sorry to see his capricious and mischievous stepdaughter well settled. But Falcroft immediately paid court to Madame Mineur, and Berenice had to content herself with watching him and making fun to her stepfather of the American painter’s height and gestures. The visit had been repeated. Berenice was amused by a dinner *en ville* and a theatre-party, and then Hubert Falcroft became a friend of the household. When Mineur was away painting the visits were not interrupted.

“Listen,” said Madame Mineur, “I wish to speak with you seriously, my dear friend.”

She made a movement as if to place her hand on his shoulder, but his expression—his face was in the light—caused her to transfer her plump fingers to her coiffure, which she touched dexterously. Hubert was disappointed.

“I am listening,” he answered. “Is it a sermon, or consent—to that portrait? Come, give in—Elaine.” He had never called her by this name before, and he anxiously awaited the result. But she did not relax her grave attitude.

“You must know, Monsieur Falcroft, what anxieties we undergo about Berenice. She is too wild for a French girl, too wild for her age——”

“Oh, let her enjoy her youth,” he interrupted.

“Alas! that youth will be soon a thing of the past,” she sighed. “Berenice is past eighteen, and her father

and I must consider her future. Figure to yourself—she dislikes young men, eligible or not, and you are the only man she tolerates.”

“And I am hopelessly ineligible,” he laughingly said.

“Why?” asked the mother quietly.

“Why! Do you know that I am nearing forty? Do you see the pepper and salt in my hair? After one passes two-score it is time to think of the past, not of the future. I am over the brow of the hill; I see the easy decline of the road—it doesn’t seem as long as when I climbed the other half.” He smiled, threw back his strong shoulders and inhaled a huge breath of air.

“Truly you are childish,” she said; “you are at the best part of your life, of your career. Yes, Théophile, my husband, who is so chary in his praise, said that you would go far if you cared.” Her low, warm voice with its pleading inflections thrilled him. He took her by the wrist.

“And would it please *you* if I went far?” She trembled.

“Not too far, dear friend—remember Berenice.”

“I remember no one but you,” he impatiently answered; and relaxing his hold he moved so that the moonlight shone on her face. She was pale. In her eyes there were fright and hope, decision and delight. He admired her more than ever.

“Let me paint you, Elaine, these next few weeks. It will be a surprise for Mineur. And I shall have something to cherish. Never mind about Berenice. She is a child. I am a middle-aged man. Between us is the wall—of the years. Never should it be climbed. While you——”

“Be careful—Hubert. Théophile is your friend.”

“He is not. I never cared for him. He dragged me out here after he had been drinking too much, and when I saw you I could not stay away. Hear me—I insist! Berenice is nice, but the wall is too high for her to climb; it might prove a——”

“How do you know the wall is too

steep for Berenice?” the girl cried as she scaled the top with apish agility, where, after a few mocking steps in the moonlight, she sank down breathless beside Hubert and laughed so loudly that her mother was fearful of hysteria.

“Berenice! Berenice!” she exclaimed.

“Oh, Berenice is all right, mama. Master Hubert, I want you to paint my portrait before papa returns; that’s to be in four weeks, isn’t it?” The elder pair regarded her disconcertedly.

“Oh, you needn’t look so dismal. I’ll not tell tales out of school. Hubert and mama flirting! What a glorious jest. Isn’t life a jest, Hubert? Let’s make a bargain! If you paint mama, you paint me also. Then, you see, papa will not be jealous, and—and——”

She was near tears, her mother felt, and she leaned over Hubert and took the girl’s hand. She grazed the long fingers of the painter, who at once caught both feminine hands in his.

“Now I have you both,” he boasted, and was shocked by a vicious tap on the cheek. Berenice, in rage, pulled her left hand free.

Silence fell. Hubert prudently began to roll another cigarette, and Madame Mineur retreated out of the moonlight, while Berenice turned her back and soon began to hum. The artist spoke first.

“See here, you silly Berenice! Turn around; I want to talk to you like a Dutch uncle, as we say in the United States. Of course I’ll paint you. But I begin with your mother. And if you wish me to like you better than ever don’t say such things as you did. It hurts your—mother.”

His voice dropped into its deepest bass. She faced him, and he saw the glitter of wet eyelashes. She was charming with her hair in disorder. Her eyes two burning points of fire.

“I beg your pardon, mama; I beg your pardon, Hubert. I’ll be good the rest of this evening. Isn’t it lovely?”

She sniffed in the breeze with dilating nostrils, and the wild look of her set him to wondering how such a gentle

mother could have such a gipsy daughter. Perhaps it was the father—yes, the old man had been an Apache in his youth, according to the slang of the studios.

"But you must paint me as I wish, not as you will," resumed Berenice. "I hate conventional portraits. Papa Mineur chills me with his cabinet pictures of haughty society ladies, their faces as stiff as their starched gowns."

"Oh, Berenice, will you never say polite things of your father?"

"Never," she defiantly replied. "He wouldn't believe me if I did. No, Hubert, I want to pose as Ophelia. Oh, don't laugh, please!"

They could not help it, and she leaped to the grass and called out:

"I don't mean a theatrical Ophelia, singing songs and spilling flowers; I mean Ophelia drowned." She threw herself on the sward, her arms crossed on her bosom, and in the moonlight they could see her eyes closed as if by death.

"Help me down, Hubert. That girl will go mad some day."

He reached the earth and he gave her a hand. Berenice had arisen. Sulkily she said:

"Shall I step into 'The Dark Tarn of Auber' and float for you? I'll make a realistic picture, my master-painter, who paints without imagination." And then she darted into the shrubbery and was lost to view. Without further speech the two regained the path and returned to the house.

II

THE CRIMSON SPLASH

WHEN Eloise was asked by Berenice how long Monsieur Mineur would remain away on his tour she did not reply; rather, she put a question herself—why this sudden solicitude about the little loved stepfather? Berenice jokingly answered that she thought of slipping away to Switzerland for a *vacance* on her own account. Eloise, who was not agreeable-looking, viewed her charge suspiciously.

"Young lady, you are too deep for me, but you'll bear watching," she grimly confessed.

Berenice skipped about her teasingly. "I know something, but I won't tell unless you tell."

"What is it?"

"Will you tell?"

"Yes."

"When is he coming back and where is he now?" she insisted.

"Your father, you half-crazy child, expects to return in a month, by the first of June. And if you wish to wire or write to him, let me know."

"Now I won't tell you *my* secret," and she was off like a gale of wind.

Eloise shook her head and wondered.

In the atelier Hubert painted. Elaine sat on a dais, her hands folded in her lap, about her head twisted nun's-veiling gave her the old-fashioned quality of a Cosway miniature—the very effect he had sought. It was to be a "pretty" affair, this picture, with its subdued lighting, the face being the only target he aimed at; all the rest, the suave background, the gauzy draperies, he would brush in—suggest, rather than state.

"I'll paint her soul—that sensitive soul of hers which tremulously peeps out of her eyes," he thought.

Elaine was a patient subject. She took the pose naturally, and scarcely breathed during the weary sittings. He recalled the early gossip, and sought to evoke her as a professional model. But he gave up in despair. She was hopelessly "ladylike," and to interpret her adequately the decorative patterns of earlier men—Mignard, Van Loo, Nattier, Largillière—would translate her native delicacy.

For nearly four weeks he had labored on the face, painting it in with meticulous touches only to rub it out with savage disgust. To transcribe those tranquil, liquid eyes, their expression more naïve than her daughter's—this had proved too difficult a problem for the usually facile technician of Falcroft. Give him a brilliant virtuoso theme, and he could handle it with some of the sweep and

splendor of the early Carolus Duran or the brutal elegance of the later Boldini. But Madame Mineur was a pastoral. She did not express nervous gesture. She was seldom dynamic. To "do" her in dots like the *pointillistes*, or in touches like the earlier impressionists, would be ridiculous, nay, destructive. Her abiding charm was her repose. She brought to him the quiet values of an eighteenth-century eclogue—he saw her as a divinely artificial shepherdess, watching an unreal flock; while the haze of decorative atmosphere would envelop her and not a vestige of real life on the canvas. Yet he knew her as a natural, lovable woman, a mother who had suffered and would suffer because of her love for her only child. It was a paradox like many other paradoxes of art.

The daughter—ah, perhaps she would better suit his style! She was admirable in her madcap carelessness and exotic coloring. Decidedly he would paint her when this picture was finished—if ever it would be.

Berenice avoided entering the studio during these sittings. She no longer jested with her mother about the picture, and with Hubert she preserved such an air of dignity that he fancied he had offended her.

He usually came to Villiers-le-Bel on an early train three or four times a week, and remained at Chalfontaine until ten o'clock. Never but once had a severe storm forced him to stay overnight. Since the episode on the wall he had not attempted any further advances. He felt happy in the company of Elaine, and gazing into her large eyes rested his spirit. It was true—he no longer played with ease the role of a soul hunter. His youth had been troubled by many adventures, many foolish ones, and now he felt a calm in the midway of his life and that desire for domestic ease which sooner or later overtakes all men. He fancied himself painting Elaine on just such tranquil summer afternoons under a soft light. And oh, the joys of long walks, discreet

gossip and dinners at a well-served table with a few chosen friends! Was he, after all, longing for the fleshpots of the philistine, he, Hubert Falcroft, who had patrolled the boulevards like other sportsmen of midnight?

At last the picture began to glow with that inner light he had so patiently pursued. Elaine Mineur looked at him from the canvas with veiled sweetness, a smile almost enigmatic lurking about her lips. Deepen a few lines and her expression would be one of contented sleekness. *That* Hubert had missed by a stroke. It was in her eyes that her chief glory abided. They were pathetic without resignation, liquid without humidity—indescribable in coloring and form. Their full cup and the accents which experience had graven under them were something he had never dreamed of realizing.

It was a Cosway, but a Cosway broadened and without a hint of genteel namby-pamby or over-elaborate finesse. Hubert was fairly satisfied. Madame Mineur had little to say. During the sittings she seldom spoke, and if their eyes met the richness of her glance was a compensation for her lack of loquacity. Hubert did not complain. He was in no hurry. To be under the same roof with this adorable woman was all that he asked.

The day after he had finished his picture he returned to Chalfontaine for the midday breakfast. Berenice was absent, in her room with a headache, her mother explained. The weather was sultry. He questioned Elaine during the meal. Had Berenice's temper improved? They passed out to the balcony where their coffee was served, and when he lighted his cigarette Madame Mineur begged to be excused. She had promised Cousin Eloise to pay some calls. He strolled over the lawn, watching the hummocks of white clouds which piled up in architectural masses across the southern sky. Then he remembered the portrait and mounted to the atelier. As he put his hand on the knob of the door he

thought he heard someone weeping. Suddenly the door was pulled from his grasp and Berenice appeared. Her hair hung on her shoulders. She was in a white dressing-gown. Her face was red and her eyes swollen. She did not attempt to move. Affectionately Hubert caught her in his arms and asked about her headache.

"It is better," she answered in scarcely audible accents.

"Why, you poor child, I hope you are not going to be ill? Have you been racing in the sun without your hat?"

"No; I haven't been out of doors since yesterday."

"What's the matter, little Berenice? Has someone been cross with her?" She pushed him from her violently.

"Hubert Falcroft, when you treat me as a woman and not as a child——"

"But I am treating you as a woman," he said. Her dark face became tragic. She had emerged from girlhood in a few hours. And as he held her closer some perverse spirit entered into his soul. Her vibrating youth and beauty forced him to gaze into her blazing eyes until he saw the pupils contract.

"Let me go!" she panted. "Let me free! I am not a doll. Go to your portrait and worship it. Let me free!"

"And what if I do not?" Something of her rebellious feeling filled his veins. He felt younger, stronger, fiercer. He put his arms about her neck and, after a silent battle, kissed her. Then she pushed by him and disappeared. He could see nothing, after the shock of the adventure, for some moments, and the semi-obscurity of the atelier was grateful to his eyes. A picture stood on the easel, but it was not, he fancied, the portrait. He went to the centre of the room, where hung the cords that controlled the curtains covering the glass roof. Then, in the flood of light, he barely recognized the head of Elaine. It was on the easel, and with a sharp pain at his heart he saw across the face a big crimson splash.

III

MOON-RAYS

THE dewy brightness of tangled blush-roses had faded in the vague twilight; through the aisles of the little wood leading to the pool the light timidly flickered as Hubert and Elaine walked with the hesitating steps of perplexed persons. They had not spoken since they left the house; there, in a few hurried words, he told her of the accident and noted with sorrow the look of anguish in her eyes. Without knowing why they went in the direction of the wall.

There was no moon when they reached the highroad. It would rise later, Elaine said, in her low, slightly monotonous voice. Hubert was so stunned by the memory of his ruined picture that he forgot his earlier encounter with Berenice; that is, in describing it, he had failed to minutely record his behavior. But in the cool evening air his conscience became alive and he guiltily wondered whether he dare tell his misconduct—no, imprudence. Why not? She regarded him as a possible husband for Berenice—but how embarrassing! He made up his mind to say nothing; when the morrow came he would write Elaine the truth and bid her good-bye. He could not in honor continue to visit this home, where resided the woman he loved with a jealous daughter. Why jealous? What a puzzle, and what an absurd one! He helped Elaine to a seat on the wall and sat near her. For several minutes neither spoke. They were again facing the pool, which looked in the dusk like a cracked mirror.

"It is not clear yet to me," murmured Elaine. "That the unfortunate child has always been more or less morbid and sick-brained I have been aware. The world, marriage, an active existence will mend all that, I hope. I fear she is a little spoiled and selfish, and she doesn't love me very much. She has inherited all her father's passion for Poe's tales. My dear friend, she is jealous; that's the only solution

of this shocking act. She disliked the idea of my portrait from the start; you remember on this spot hardly a month ago she challenged you to paint her as the drowned Ophelia—and all her teasing about Monsieur Mineur and his jealousy, and——”

“Our flirtation,” added Hubert sadly.

“Oh, pray, do not say such a thing! She is so hot-headed, so fond of you! Yes, I saw it from the beginning, and, despite your talk about the insurmountable wall of middle age, was not deceived. I only hope that will not be a tragic one for her, for you—or for me.”

Her words trailed into a mere whisper. He put his hand over hers, and again they were silent. About them the green of the forest had been transformed by the growing night into great clumps of velvety darkness, and the vault overhead was empty of stars. June airs fanned their discontent into mild despair, and simultaneously they dreamed of another life, of a harmonious existence far from Paris, into which the phantom of Théophile Mineur would never intrude. Yet they made no demonstration of their affection; they would have been happy to sit and dream on this moon-haunted wall, near this nocturnal pool, forever.

Hubert pictured Berenice in her room, behind bolted doors, lying across the bed weeping, or else staring in sullen repentance at the white ceiling. Why had she indulged in such vandalism! The portrait was utterly destroyed by the flaring smear laid on with a brush in the hand of an enraged young animal. What sort of a woman might not develop from this tempestuous girl! He knew that he had mortally offended her by his rudeness. But it was after, not before, the cruel treatment accorded his beloved work. Yet, how like a man had been his rapid succumbing to transitory temptation! For it was transitory; of that he was sure. The woman he loved with a reverend love was next to him, and if his pulse did not beat as furiously at this moment as earlier in the day, why—all

the better. He was through forever with his boyish recklessness.

“Another peculiar thing,” broke in Elaine, as if she had been thinking aloud, “is that Berenice has been pestering Eloise for her father’s address.”

“Her father’s address?” echoed her companion.

“Yes; but whether she wrote to him Eloise could not say.”

“Why should she write to him? She dislikes him, dislikes him almost as much——” he was about to pronounce his own name. She caught him up.

“Yes, that is the singular part of this singular affair. She felt slighted because you painted my portrait before hers. I confess I have had my misgivings. You should have been more considerate of her feelings, Hubert, my friend.”

She paused and sighed. For him the sigh was a spark that blew up the magazine of his firmest resolves. He had been touching her hands fraternally. His arm enlaced her so that she could not escape, as this middle-aged man told his passion with the ardor of an enamoured youth.

“You dare not tell me you do not care for me! Elaine—let us reason. I loved you since the first moment I met you. It is folly to talk of Mineur and my friendship for him. I dislike, I despise him. It is folly to talk of Berenice and her childish pranks. What if she did cruelly spoil my work, *our* work! She will get over it. Girls always do get over these things. Let us accept conditions as they are. Say you love me—a little bit—and I’ll be content to remain at your side, a friend, *always* that. I’ll paint you again—much more beautifully than before.” He was hoarse from the intensity of his feelings. The moon had risen and tipped with her silver brush the tops of the trees.

“And—my husband? And Berenice?”

“Let things remain as they are.” He pressed her to him. A crackling in the underbrush and a faint splash in the lake startled them asunder. They listened with ears that seemed

like beating hearts. There was no movement; only a night-bird plaintively piped in the distance and a clock struck the quarter.

Elaine, now thoroughly frightened, tried to get down from the wall. Hubert restrained her, and as they stood thus a moaning like the wind in autumnal leaves reached them. The moon-rays began to touch the water, and suddenly a nimbus of light formed about a floating face in the pool. The luminous path broadened and to their horror they saw Berenice, her hair outspread, her arms crossed on her young bosom lying in the little lake. Elaine screamed:

"My God! My God! It is Berenice—Berenice, I am punished for my wickedness to you!" Hubert, stunned by the vision, did not stir as the almost fainting mother gripped his neck.

Then the eyes of the whimsical girl opened. A malicious smile distorted her pretty face. Slowly she arose, a dripping ghost in white, and pointing her long thin fingers in the direction of the Ecouen road she mockingly cried:

"There is someone to see your portrait at last, dear master-painter." And saying this she vanished in the gloom, instantly followed by her agitated mother.

Hubert turned toward the wall and upon it he recognized the stepfather of Berenice. After staring at each other like two moon-struck wights, the American spoke:

"I swear that I, alone, am to blame

for this—" The other wore the grin of a malevolent satyr. His voice was very thick.

"Why apologize, Hubert? You know that it has been my devoted wish that you marry Berenice." He swayed on his perch. Hubert's brain was in a fog.

"Berenice!" said he.

"Yes—Berenice. Why not? She loves you."

"Then—you—Madame Mineur—" stammered Hubert. The Frenchman placed his finger on his nose and slyly whispered:

"Don't be afraid! I'll not tell my wife that I caught Berenice with you alone in the park—you Don Juan! Now to the portrait—I must see that masterpiece of yours. Berenice wrote me about it." He nodded his head sleepily.

"Berenice wrote you about it!" was the mechanical reply.

"I'll join you and we'll go to the house." He tried to step down, but rolled over at Hubert's feet.

"What a joke is this champagne," he growled as he was lifted to his tottering legs. "We had a glorious time this afternoon before I left Paris. Hurrah! You're to be my son-in-law. And my boy, I don't envy you—that's the truth. With such a little demon for a wife—I pity you, pity you—hurrah!"

"I am more to be despised," muttered Hubert Falcroft as they moved away from the peaceful moonlit wall.



FULFILLED AMBITION

"AS an artist Palette always aimed high, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"And has he succeeded?"

"Well, his last picture was the top one in the exhibition."

THE GHOST

THROUGH the open gate of Dreamland
 Came a ghost of long ago, long ago.
 When I wakened, all unheeding
 Was the phantom to my pleading,
 For he would not turn and go.
 But beside me all the day
 In my work, and in my play,
 Trod this ghost of long ago, long ago.

Not a vague and pallid phantom
 Was this ghost that came to me, followed me;
 Though he rose from regions haunted,
 Though he came unbid, unwanted,
 He was very fair to see.
 Like the radiant sun in space
 Was the halo round the face
 Of that ghost that came to me, followed me.

And he wore no shroud or cerecloth,
 As he wandered at my side, close beside.
 He was clothed in royal splendor,
 And his eyes were deep and tender,
 While he walked in stately pride.
 And he seemed like some great king,
 Not afraid of anything,
 As he wandered at my side, close beside.

Then I turned to him, commanding
 That he go the way he came, whence he came;
 But he answered me in sorrow,
 "May the Past not seek to borrow
 From the Present, without blame,
 Just one memory from its store,
 Ere it goes to come no more,
 Back the pathway that it came, whence it came?"

Then, ashamed of my full coffers,
 I gave forth from Memory's hold (wondrous hold!)
 All I owed of tax, and duty,
 For remembered hours of beauty,
 Which I paid in thoughts of gold.
 Yet my Present seemed to be,
 Richer still for all the fee
 I gave forth from Memory's hold (wondrous hold!)

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

CHARLOTTE

By Edna Kenton

MRS. TREMAINE had entered her sitting-room steadfastly resolute. Her eyes had held indeed that high serenity in the face of superhuman dread which pictured martyrs wear. She had gone straight to her small, old-fashioned rosewood desk, and had begun a letter, looking neither to the right nor to the left. She had written two lines in a firm, delicate hand. Then a sudden wavering swept over her, which, mental at first, became at last almost purely physical, and she drew her chair close to the small open fire, and bent low before it, warming her hands, beautiful still, despite their traces of household labor.

She sat so for two hours, bent before the fire which she absently replenished from time to time, until footsteps rang suddenly upon the walk outside, and loud voices and louder laughter accompanied and almost drowned them. She started violently at the sound, and involuntarily straightened herself in her chair. The outer door opened noisily. Then the sitting-room door was pushed ajar, and a girl's coppery-hued head appeared.

"Yes, she's up as usual," she called back to the group crowding behind her. "We're to wind up with a chafing-dish supper, mother. Did the cheese come? Jim's got the beer."

The door was flung wide open now, and the young man Jim was thrust forward, his pockets filled with bottles, his arms full, and several corked necks protruding from his waistcoat. He bowed to Mrs. Tremaine with a certain daredevil grace.

"Charlie wouldn't let me carry home a respectable case of hops, Mrs. Tre-

maine," he explained. "She insisted on stuffing me up this way."

Mrs. Tremaine smiled, so lightly, so graciously, that the young man discovered himself now—as he had often found himself before—taken aback at feeling apologetic, when there was apparently no need for explanation.

"Oh, it was me, all right, Jim!" shouted the coppery-headed girl he had called "Charlie," somewhere from the rear of the house. "Bring them on out to the dining-room. Ask mother where the alcohol is. And for goodness' sake, tell Ned to get a move on, and shave up the cheese. I can't feed the lot of you by myself. It's downright imposition, anyway!"

"Tell Charlotte the alcohol is on the lower pantry-shelf," said Mrs. Tremaine to the beer-laden young man. Her tone was serene and gracious—not dismissing. No one of the young people standing there, the two young women and the three young men, knew what ended the scene so immediately, but they left her with one accord, to what comfort she might find in her severely simple sitting-room, severe as her house, severe and simple as her tastes.

Yet one room was the exception to the uniform plainness of the home. Mrs. Tremaine heard them trooping into it, the room across the hall, which Charlotte had remodeled a year before, with her first earnings, according to her own notions; whose austerity she had bedeviled with steins of the cheapest sort, since she could afford no others, with strings of corks and cigars and cigarettes: the room which she called "Devil's Den." Because of that her

own name for it, some of the young men whom she knew, and most of the traveling men who were brought up to see Charlotte Tremaine from time to time, called her "Little Devil," an intimately caressing term which delighted her so much that she did not share it with her mother.

During the next two hours the soul of Gertrude Tremaine sickened within her, as she sat across the hall from the merrymaking which filled the hours. Of the three men whom her daughter was entertaining she knew personally only Jim Devine. The other two were traveling men who dropped into Evanstown now and then, and whose homing-place had come to be more and more the large, old-fashioned Tremaine house. Of the women she knew personally even less. One was a Mrs. Heathcote, a recent arrival in Evanstown—as Evanstown dated arrivals, being in itself a town which for seventy-five years had cherished jealously the same old families and their descendants. Mrs. Heathcote had come into the place three years before, unheralded and unsung. After her arrival she became her own herald and peculiar songstress. It was variously affirmed of the absent Heathcote that he was dead, alive, divorced, undivorced. Yet the town never knew the truth. Any one report might be true, or two, or none. But Miriam Heathcote had become Charlotte Tremaine's most intimate friend. The other woman was a cousin of Mrs. Heathcote's who had been visiting her for a month.

She listened absently to the shreds of talk and gusts of laughter that floated to her across the hall. She followed the mode of procedure as well as if she were with them. She knew that Charlotte would first prepare the tray with plates and cooking accessories, that Miriam Heathcote would clear the long table in the den of its ostentatious novels and magazines. Then someone, a man usually, would make the rabbit, and there would be much uproarious merriment, and at last, never before midnight, the party would break up, with what farewells

Mrs. Tremaine did not know. And, not knowing, she would not let herself imagine.

Once, while she waited, she glanced toward the unfinished letter lying on her desk and half rose, as if to finish it. But the same surge of mental wavering swept over her again and thrust her back, mentally and physically shaken. What should she do—what should she do! What was right—The Right! She was weary of the everlasting relativity of Truth. She longed tonight for omnipotent knowledge.

She shivered as a louder peal of laughter smote her ears. It was relative right, which, after two years, had brought about such a state of things as that carousal yonder—in her home. At first, when she had once and for all realized the fearful change in Charlotte, her only child, she had been on the point of issuing sweeping commands and had caught herself back just in time. It was forever too late. Her only comfort lay in the hard conviction that nothing could have arrested the force of natural development; that it was pure hereditary tendency working itself out through opposing environment. At times, when absolute loathing of her daughter swept over her—and such moments came to Gertrude Tremaine—the thought of her husband made her pitiful for the girl—Will Tremaine's child as much as her own. And so she had loosed her enduring hold of Right Absolute, and had clutched at the straw of Right Relative. It was outrageous that such things should happen beneath her roof as that thing yonder, with such people! But it had seemed better that it should happen here than that Charlotte should constantly go elsewhere. That had been the point of her most wearing debate, the place where she had held back from stern command till she might speak with wisdom. And this night's work was a piece of that wisdom! Truly Gertrude Tremaine felt justified in scorning herself, until she remembered with a throb of thankfulness that, after all, it was here—in Charlotte's home—and that she her-

self, in the face of this invasion of her sanctuary, and this upheaval of maternal and filial relations, had kept inviolate the right to sit across the hall in unseen and unseeing chaperonage until the guests were gone, watching over her child—her child and Will Tremaine's.

She glanced at her desk again, at thought of her husband. All day, throughout her conflict with duty as to whether it demanded or did not demand the writing of that letter, memories of her marriage had been inextricably mingled. It was the living memory of that bitterness which made her so long for Charlotte's happiness in this swiftly approaching marriage of hers. It was this fierce desire for her child's welfare which had stayed her hand at the end of the second line of her letter and had cast her down before the fire in an agony of indecision. She knew the girl loved Lane Nelson, that for three years she had waited faithfully enough, while her lover fought for health and wealth in the far West; that she had kept sacred that single ideal through the unbelievable changes which the years had wrought in her in every other way. When she thought only of Charlotte's immediate happiness Mrs. Tremaine knew she was not able to write that letter. But when she thought of Lane Nelson, already as dear to her as a son of her own might have been, and of the two together, Lane and Charlotte, then her purpose became steady and her world ceased reeling and she was resolved—until the thought of Charlotte and Charlotte's happiness came to her mind again and drowned honest conviction and killed firmness and resolve.

She sat there, quiet and still, until the guests went at last, and her daughter came in, tawny-haired, tawny-eyed, tall and slender. Her cheeks were more than red and her lips more than crimson. Mrs. Tremaine found her eyes lingering fascinatedly on the spots of color as they had lingered in spite of her repulsion ever since Charlotte had begun her steady use of pencils and cosmetics.

The girl still held a half-smoked cigarette between her fingers, and she lifted it to her lips; then, as her mother rose, she laughed good-humoredly and tossed it into the fire.

"I beg your pardon, mother," she said, the lightness of her tone making her apology none at all. "You really oughtn't to sit up so late. You ought to know that gang never goes."

Mrs. Tremaine said nothing at all, but moved quietly about, looking to the window fastenings for the short remainder of the night. Charlotte threw herself into a chair and opened her lips to speak. It took a second such effort to bring the words:

"We're going down to the Fox and Hounds Club Saturday. Miriam's to chaperon."

Her mother turned toward her swiftly. It was impulsive of Gertrude Tremaine and the impulse was sternly killed, for she turned away quickly without speaking. Charlotte saw the compression of the firm lips and faced again, for the thousandth time in these two years, her mother's unswerving silence. It made her angry—it always made her angry.

"You don't like it!" she said, almost with a sneer, so great was her anger.

"Discussion of my likes and dislikes was closed two years ago," said Mrs. Tremaine quietly. "You are your own mistress. If you elect to go to the clubhouse, you will go."

"We're going to stay a week," said Charlotte, with indescribable defiance.

Then Gertrude Tremaine did turn and stare. "Charlotte!" was all she said.

"Well, I don't care!" said the girl. "It's a gay old gang, the only one I've had any fun with. It'll be a last fling now, mother; everything's ready and I give up my position Saturday, thank God! Why shouldn't I go? There'd be just a week of hanging round before we leave for the West. I know you hate the crowd, but they're my sort!" Her eyes flashed again as her mother's lips tightened. "Oh," she said breathlessly, "I could scream sometimes!"

"We talked all this out two years ago, Charlotte," said her mother. "I told you then my surrender was absolute. Miriam Heathcote's influence was supreme, and it became merely a question of whether I would or would not allow you to have your friends here, for go with them you would, somewhere. I told you then that I should never discuss matters with you again. If my manner induces in you a hysterical desire to scream I can only regret it. Knowing my opinions as you do, you doubtless read much into my manner that is not there at all."

"Well," said Charlotte, with a burst of that frankness which was her greatest redeeming feature, "I'll say this for you, that nobody in the crowd has ever been able to see your detestation of them all, unless it's Miriam, and she's never dared say it to me."

The words pained Mrs. Tremaine almost beyond endurance. That a girl of such innate perceptions as Charlotte could not but have—that she should stoop as she had stooped to the vulgar fastness of a small town's smart set aping city smartnesses! She did not reply at once.

"You said that you have written Angela about your coming trip?" she asked at last.

"Yes," said Charlotte. She paused a moment. "I wrote to Lane, too, to-night," she added.

Gertrude Tremaine had always had queer telepathic experiences which caught her unawares. Such a one held her now, as her brain traveled just one word ahead of Charlotte's tongue.

"We'll be out there two weeks from this morning," Charlotte said. "I hadn't fixed the date, and Lane's letter was impatient for final plans; and what's the use of waiting? I wrote him that we'd be married that same evening."

"Charlotte!" breathed her mother. Her voice was a mere whisper. The girl flushed slightly. She hardly knew of what her mother disapproved. If it were any unmaidenly haste she resented the implication.

"I'm sure," she said, "that as far

as urgings go, Lane's been crazy to have me come for the last year; only I wouldn't go there, to a new place, without the clothes I wanted. I've got them now, thanks to that horrible office! And I'm just as glad now of the wait. It's done me good to see more of people of the world. Lane's been mixing up all this time with new people and things—he'll not find me so far behind him."

Mrs. Tremaine shrank together in her chair. Her daughter lolled gracefully along an old lounge. The silence lasted long, and Charlotte looked more and more uncertain.

"Perhaps you're thinking I should have spoken to you first," she said at last, with a touch of embarrassment. "Honestly, I didn't think of it. I wanted to get the letter off, and remembered it just as we were coming home tonight, when I saw the post-office being locked up. So Jim made Mr. Irving unlock it and sell us some paper and envelopes and stamps, and they all stood off and geyed me while I wrote." She laughed aloud, a laugh utterly amused. "Oh, it's rich!" she cried. "Miriam there, thinking she knows all about me, and not dreaming of this engagement—and me writing that letter right under her nose!—honestly, mother, it's funny, if you only look at it that way."

Mrs. Tremaine turned her face away, toward the purple night without. She had a vivid memory of herself writing her letter to Will Tremaine, setting her wedding day, all but on her knees, in solitude, with prayers and exaltations. That her marriage had been what it had been did not detract an iota from the sacredness of that solemn pledging of herself. And her daughter had set that date in a band of roysterers, had written it between jest and jeer.

She turned back at last. "This will not do, Charlotte," she said firmly.

Charlotte Tremaine looked up quickly and then sat upright, staring, flushing and paling. She was only twenty-three, and up to two years before had been dutiful. She could never get entirely away from the old, compelling

discipline, tender as it had always been.

"What won't do?" she demanded. Then her words hurried over each other. "I tell you I didn't even think of you, mother. The letter had to go on the midnight express, or it wouldn't reach him when I want it to. It had to go. What difference does it make? I've told you now! It's my wedding day. I won't change it, mother, not for anybody, unless there's a wreck and I'm pinned under a car. I'm not superstitious, but I won't change my wedding day!"

"This is not the point, Charlotte," said her mother quietly. Her eyes calmed the girl, hysterical under a nervous strain she would not have owned to. She paused again, and then faced her daughter as from across a mighty gulf. She had never known before how utterly apart they were. Yet she was the mother of this stranger and so responsible, in spite of the chasm of feeling between them.

"This is not the point, Charlotte," she repeated. "We were to have left in ten days' time. But this move of yours changes the entire aspect of things. Instead of leaving a week from Monday we shall go day after tomorrow."

"Mother!" cried Charlotte passionately. "You forget. I don't want to go so soon. We're going down to the club then. I know when I want to start. I want that last spree—mother!" For at two o'clock in the morning Mrs. Tremaine was sitting down at her desk, resolutely finishing the letter whose date and salutation alone she had completed.

She looked up as she folded the sheet. "I have written Lane, saying that we are leaving Saturday morning," she said briefly. She stamped and sealed it and rose quietly.

"We would better say good night, Charlotte," she said. "It is very late." She paused beside the girl and laid a shrinking hand upon the tawny hair. "I am—sorry, Charlotte," she said wistfully. "If I could let you have your way to the end it

would be infinitely easier. But I *cannot* let you be married to Lane Nelson without a breathing space."

"Mother!" cried Charlotte, pained and angry. "Don't you think I know just what Lane is, how he's changed, and what he is. Don't you know I'm sure of him—that I love him?"

Gertrude Tremaine smiled above her daughter's head. So had she smiled often over her husband's most delicious egotisms. This self-centeredness was no new thing to her.

"Even with your certainty," she said, "we must leave Saturday."

There were moments still when Charlotte met the inevitable and yielded gracefully. She rose now with a slight yawn and her old good-humored smile.

"It's all foolish," she said. "But after all I don't mind seeing Lane sooner. And it's a cracking good joke on the gang!" She laughed. She had her father's unctuous appreciation of a joke.

Mrs. Tremaine's smile went as Charlotte's came. But she bent down suddenly, and put her arms strainingly about the girl, and kissed her lips with odd passion. In an instant she drew back. The nauseating perfume of cheap cosmetics sickened her, body and soul. She hoped Charlotte had not noticed. But Charlotte had.

"Poor mummie!" she said lightly. "It's so hard for you to take to anything new. But after your year with Aunt May in Los Angeles you'll come to us, and never come back to this jail of a town." She frowned quickly. "Thank God I'm getting out of it for good! Come, it's too late to talk, with all this packing before us. When you get an idea into your head—" She laughed again. "It's a heavenly mercy everything's ready—otherwise tomorrow would be bedlam and hell combined. Good night, mother."

Mrs. Tremaine looked after her, and as the door swung ajar behind her she put out her foot and closed it altogether. Then she sank down on the floor, and buried her face in the chair cushions. She had written the letter,

not the letter which she had tried to make herself write, but one which would surely serve the other's end. And she was sick at heart over what she had done and her great part in what was to be.

II

THEY were yet an hour's distance from San Francisco when Charlotte threw her novel aside and bent for her hand-bag. She gazed critically at herself in the mirror.

"How traveling does take it out of one!" she said cheerfully, even in the grip of dire defeat. "I haven't got a shred of color, in spite of everything."

Mrs. Tremaine glanced at her daughter, whose cheeks were really paler than their wont. Her lips parted for speech, and then her eyes darkened with pain and dread.

"I'm going to freshen up," said the girl after a silence. "I think I'll wear that white linen shirt-waist suit, mother."

Her mother did not reply, and Charlotte did not return for three-quarters of an hour. As she came down the car at last she was startlingly lovely, with her shining hair, and her rich brown eyes, and her red, red lips and cheeks. But Mrs. Tremaine paled in acute despair as she saw the drifts of bright color and the darkened lashes and the shadowed eyes. She had hoped against hope that Charlotte would have perception enough not to—and then she stopped to wonder what she really wanted, after all. Why had she insisted on this intervening week between meeting and marriage, if it were not that each should see the other truly?

She averted her eyes from her daughter's smiling face. Charlotte was talking constantly, with happy bits of laughter bubbling irrepressibly from her lips, and her mother listened with terror tugging at her heart. What had she set in motion by her meddling insistence! Had it not been for her this journey would end in imme-

diately marriage. Had it not been for her Charlotte would go straight to Lane Nelson's arms. And Charlotte loved him, loved him! Swift fear seized the mother, mad impulse to hasten the marriage by some means—any means!

And then she sank nervelessly back, for the train had slowed its speed, and the door at one end already held Lane's figure, and Charlotte had stretched out her hands, with a little cry of joy.

Mrs. Tremaine watched their kiss, brief, yet unutterably clinging. She looked at Lane with wild, scared eyes as he bent over her. "Dearest mother!" he whispered, motherless boy that he was. He sat on the arm of her chair, and he and Charlotte gazed fleetingly at each other. No one of them had realized before how long the time had been. Three years!

He drove with them to the rooms he had taken for them at a hotel. Mrs. Tremaine felt herself to be a shield which each was holding up against the other. She felt even more than this, half an hour later, when Charlotte came in to help her dress for dinner. During the evening she was not allowed to leave them a moment. Charlotte was flushed and conscious, filled with excitement which found vent in shrill-voiced jest and laughter. Lane was silent and half troubled. He kissed them both as he said good night. But this time, with only the mother's eye on them, the kiss between him and Charlotte was briefer, a mere brushing of the lips. And when he bent to kiss Gertrude it was his eyes which held question and appeal.

Charlotte watched him oddly as he went away. "He's—just the same!" she said. She hesitated a moment. "I supposed that—there's certainly lots of life to see out here in San Francisco, and from the way he wrote sometimes I supposed he was seeing it."

"Lane has not stood still, Charlotte," said her mother. "To have come out here three years ago, unknown to his profession, and to have risen as he has done——"

Charlotte frowned. "Oh, I know," she said. She laughed suddenly. "I dare say I shocked him to death twice tonight. I don't care. I wanted to know those two things, and I supposed you could ask a doctor anything." She glanced at her mother, whose face had flushed suddenly. Charlotte's own face colored angrily.

"I suppose you think it was bold," she said hotly. "And he thinks so too, or else that it was pure ignorance—at any rate, he answered me like a child. I don't care to be treated like a child—or to be disapproved of for nothing."

She went away to her room, without kissing her mother good night—she hardly ever kissed her mother now. Gertrude Tremaine lay awake till morning, and she had a feeling which amounted to certainty that, in the room adjoining, Charlotte was lying with eyes opened and straining at the ceiling. Which was altogether true.

But the next morning found Mrs. Tremaine quite exhausted. She remained in her room all day, and did not go down for dinner at night. It was not till the next morning therefore that she saw Lane and Charlotte together, when they came into her sitting-room shortly before luncheon. She looked at them curiously. Lane's fine, clean-cut face was grave almost to sternness, though his eyes were soft enough with longing and bewilderment. Charlotte's face was coolly flip-pant, and her chin was poised for war.

"Can't you possibly come out with us, mother?" she asked. "There's some drive or other afoot, which Lane thinks won't be perfect without you."

Lane Nelson started to speak, and then his lips closed tightly. Charlotte glanced at him from beneath her darkened lashes and laughed. "Oh, he thinks it," she said tartly. "Do come."

The mother read the pain in both their hearts and thought again on the thing she had deliberately done. But she shook her head slowly.

"I am well enough," she said, "but the weariness does not go. Some

other time, Lane—" Her voice died as she met his eyes, so full of fierce questioning. The tense look was broken by Charlotte's impertinent voice:

"Then be your loveliest to him, mother, while I get on some powder and things."

Their gaze fell apart, and Mrs. Tremaine stared steadily from her window. The mysteries of her daughter's toilet—alas, no mysteries!—pained and shamed her more than anything else. Charlotte's cigarette smoking did not affect her in so terrible a way as Charlotte's rouge and rosoline and eye pencils, and she felt Lane's shocked disgust as if it were her own.

It was he at last who broke the silence. "Have you met the Morse girls here, mother?" he asked abruptly. He had called her "mother" for a long, long time.

Mrs. Tremaine merely nodded. She had met the Morse girls at breakfast the day before when she had gone down with Charlotte. There were two of them, Kitty and Bettina, who had come out from Denver on the same train with them, and with whom Charlotte had fraternized more or less during the last few hours of the journey. The Morses, it developed, were residents of this hotel, and the surprise at meeting was complete. Two men had joined them later, one a brother, the other not. After breakfast Charlotte had gone over to the Morse suite, had to be sent for, indeed, when Lane came. Mrs. Tremaine knew nothing more of the progress of the acquaintance. She only knew with bitterness that they were Charlotte's "sort."

The young man was staring gloomily in front of him. "I dare say it wasn't up to me to give Charlotte any hints about them," he said at length. "Though that was certainly all I meant to do. Of course they're stunners—but you see the sort they are, mother?"

Mrs. Tremaine nodded again, and the young man continued: "Charlotte wanted us to go with their crowd yesterday afternoon. If she wanted that

—well, we went. But last night, after I left her, she went over to their rooms to the usual little affair that brought them the usual warning from the clerk; those three girls, and the brother, and the Morse girls' crowd of men. I was astonished—I find I am astonished. It lasted till two o'clock, did you know it—or where she was—or what sort they are—or care?"

His words were robbed of their harshness by the pain in his eyes. Mrs. Tremaine's matched his in agony. "I know that she came to her room at two o'clock," she said. "No more."

She faced steadily for a moment his amazement, his accusation, his judgment. But her eyes wavered at last, and her voice broke into ten thousand quivers.

"Blame me, blame me, if you will, Lane. If you can!" she cried. "Oh, blame me bitterly if you can."

She turned her face away, and not until Charlotte, boldly beautified, came back was the silence broken. The girl picked up a loose coat and flung it over his arm.

"You'd better come, mother," she called over a forbidding shoulder. "It will be a day of confessions, if you don't."

III

WHETHER or not it was a day of confessions Mrs. Tremaine did not learn that evening. Nor the next day, nor the next. The seventh day came at last since their arrival, and the wedding had not been mentioned unless between Lane and Charlotte. Mrs. Tremaine had had to endure a call from her old, old friend, Dr. Graves, the minister who was to perform the marriage ceremony for her daughter, and he indeed had mentioned it, but only as a brief text whereon to hang his panegyric of Lane Nelson, who had come out three years before, facing death and poverty, and had splendidly conquered both. His wonderful skill in surgery had brought him fame and wealth, and he counted as his greatest fee the thanks of the poor, whose sor-

rows he was constantly turning to joy. Mrs. Tremaine had listened with painful intentness. She herself had seen but little of Nelson; she had been afraid to trust herself alone with him, for she read the myriad questions in his eyes, and she could not answer them, not yet. For the present her part was done. She had dared what she had dared. She must sit back now and let them work it out together, Lane and Charlotte. Yet the strain of the hours was unbearable. The silence became a fearful thing. She discovered herself to be longing for the end—any end.

She sat alone in her sitting-room after dinner on the seventh evening, waiting. The golden dusk was filling the room, and she longed for its deeper shadows. They had dined with the Morses that evening. Charlotte had accepted the invitation for herself and her mother and Lane. Mrs. Tremaine had found herself seated beside Hugh Morse's friend and boon companion, Harry Mott, and was immediately aware that she was being deliberately studied by that handsome man of the world. He monopolized her, approached her inner citadels by many paths, retreated always in good order when repulse met him, but returned always to courteous attack. In self-defense, therefore, ignorant as she was of any motive, she began a swift, subtle study of him, wondering at his personal magnetism, which at times almost overcame her distaste of the man. He was midway in his thirties, a handsome daredevil with a bit more innate dignity than daredevils usually possess, an immaculate personal appearance and perfect bearing. As she sat alone in the twilight Mrs. Tremaine was trying to fathom his purpose, the source of his interest, even in the midst of her suspense.

For, while she had talked to Harry Mott and allowed him to talk to her she had been watching Lane and Charlotte across from her. They had talked together from time to time, with rigid self-control. Just as the coffee and Camembert came Charlotte had pushed back her chair and had asked leave of

her hostesses to take Dr. Nelson away. The informal intimacy which her preposterous act betrayed shocked Mrs. Tremaine anew, shocked as she was already by the look on their faces as they went away together. She had come up to her sitting-room in haste and for one long hour had waited—waited for the sure and certain end.

Of course she knew what it would be, that there would be no marriage on the morrow. Poor Charlotte, poor Charlotte! In some vague, utterly sure way, she felt herself wholly to blame. Perhaps, had she been gentler, or not so gentle; firmer, or not so firm, this fearful development might never have come. Charlotte had been so sweet, so sweet—whence had sprung the terrible change! She writhed under self-torturings and unanswerable questions.

A knock sounded at last. She could hardly respond to it, her throat contracted so. But it was merely a bell-boy, with a card. She leaned to the light to read it—"Mr. Henry Mott."

"Very well," she said, after an instant's hesitation. "I will see him here."

She half rose to light the room, but sank back in surprise at Mott's immediate entrance.

"I followed the boy up," he explained, coming with the sureness of a night-sighted animal to where she sat beside the window. "Pray do not," he added as she motioned toward an electric button. "That is, if you will allow me to talk to you here in the twilight?"

Mrs. Tremaine pointed to a chair opposite, and he sank into it with murmured thanks. She watched him curiously. So this was what his dinner-talk had been leading up to! But she could not yet fathom his motive, knew that she did not even suspect it. She watched him place the tips of his fingers thoughtfully together, looked at his firm lips and fine jaw. "A magnificent animal!" she thought to herself quietly.

Mott raised his eyes at last from their calm survey of his quiet fingers.

"May I ask you a single question,

Mrs. Tremaine?" he asked. "Do you believe at all in love at first sight, instantaneous love?"

The question was so utterly astonishing that the surprise of it startled Gertrude Tremaine into speech franker than she had ever used. "Only in the rarest of instances," she said. "Love at first sight, that is. In mad passion at first sight, yes, many sad times over."

It was quite the bravest thing she had ever said. Mott was looking keenly at her, and she looked back, with a faint flush staining her pallid cheeks. She wondered later how she could have been so stupidly unprepared for his next words.

"It is not the latter fleeting madness that I feel for Charlotte, Mrs. Tremaine; because I feel too great a sorrow for her, too great a pity."

"I don't understand," Mrs. Tremaine said at last. "Why should you be sorry, pitiful?"

Her voice died away. For a moment Mott was silent.

"Come," he said at last. "We will not beat about the bush because we need not. You are a saint, and I am—a man. Perhaps that is why I can feel sorry for her when you can feel only horror at her. But you do not lie, and I do not, and we should be able to talk to each other without shams. So I shall tell you first of all that I loved your daughter from that first morning of our meeting, the strangest sort of thing that could have happened to me ever. Because even so early I saw behind the veil that neither she nor you have ever rent; how you stood off in horror of her, as if, poor child, she were some monster you had brought to birth; how you have denied her freedom, comprehension, sympathy——"

Gertrude Tremaine cried out sharply. "I love—I love her," she said, with staring eyes.

"I wonder," mused the man. "But you don't understand her. Nor does that young man. You are not a prude and he is not a prig, but neither of you can understand. He never

can. Perhaps, some time, you may. Tonight she is ending that pitiful engagement—now you will not blame me for that—you brought her out here to end it, you know; for him to find her out—my dear Mrs. Tremaine, all this is not guessing nor second sight. Charlotte and I have talked together as perhaps two people never talked before, with naked intimacy and no word of love. Somehow I saw that first day the story, and somehow she saw I saw it. That first night at the Morses', when she came up after she had sent Nelson away, she talked to me—it happened strangely—these things do. She told me all her cheap little story of these last three years. She trotted out all her ten-cent opinions and philosophies which she has gotten from common people. She told me how far she had outgrown this man, her lover—yes, she told me even that, and she is a reserved girl. She has not outgrown him? Well, I substituted a word for hers; you shall do the same. This much we must grant, that they are not any longer on the same plane."

"We shall not quarrel over terms," said Mrs. Tremaine bitterly. "Since we both grant that."

"And at last," Mott continued slowly, "you will pardon this—she spoke freely of her home life, her mother, her father—and then, what the sight of you could not explain, her unconscious revelations did—I am not presuming—not by so much as a hair's breadth."

He remained silent for a moment, however, after Mrs. Tremaine's imperious gesture of rebuke. But he leaned close to her at last.

"What if she had been born a boy!" he said swiftly. "You had never thought of that, nor of the tragedy when a boy's legitimate, infinite curiosity about life is caged within a girl's body. She would have been normal then. She is abnormal now, I grant, but no god who understands humanity could blame her. She has done cheap things. She has acquired cheap views. She has twisted standards. I know

all this. But I have given you the key to it, I swear. She needs freedom, space—I want to take her now, marry her immediately, before all this humiliation has had time to work its bad effects. She is terribly wounded, sorely hurt. And I have come to you with this, before I go to her, because I am not banded with her against you."

Then Gertrude Tremaine spoke passionately, and long, and he listened gravely.

"Of course, you must have all these things answered," he said at last. "Charlotte told me of your lifelong friendship with Dr. Graves, who was to have married her tomorrow. He has known me a long time and my people before me. He will tell you that I have lived my life, and that I have taken it at a rapid gait. But he can bring no low deed against me. He can bring you no woman I have wronged, no man whom I have cheated. I have had my pleasures, but I have played squarely and ended fairly. I grant you now that I am not the sort of man a woman of your type could ever knowingly marry. I should never dare tell a woman of your type any of my moral lapses if I hoped to win her. But Charlotte—" He smiled a little. "She is too liberal now, poor child—the inevitable reaction of her red blood against her cold environment—she will narrow gloriously with years and knowledge—but we understand each other—"

The door went violently open, and Charlotte came in. She went straight to her mother.

"Be content, mother," she said, her voice quivering with anger at white heat. "You have saved Lane from me. He has just told me what I am: cheap and bold and vulgar, below him and you. Oh, he was angry when he said it—but he said it all—"

"Charlotte! Charlotte!" her mother had been saying, and Charlotte, turning suddenly, saw Mott rising from his chair. She paused with a sob of shame and anger, and turned to flee. But Harry Mott caught her back.

"Will you marry me tomorrow,

Charlotte?" he asked swiftly. "At least your mother has not said no."

"But she will never say yes," Charlotte Tremaine flung back, with an unlovely laugh. "You are too much like me—below them—it would be a pity to take you into the family!"

"I know," said Mott steadily. "But because of that I think your mother will say yes."

"If you wish," said Gertrude Tremaine frozenly, "you may marry him tomorrow."

Her daughter laughed, but the laughter changed into a strangled sob. "I'll marry no one tomorrow," she said fiercely. "I hate the day."

"Then marry me tonight," said Mott quickly. "Have it over with. Marry me tonight!"

He turned on the lights suddenly, and Charlotte stared at him blindly. "I want no twilight deeds in this," he said almost sternly, "nor twilight decisions. But you know that you are made for me, and I know I have waited all my life for you. Marry me tonight."

She stared at him, and twice tried to speak. He waited for her words, but when a certain terror crept into her eyes he went up to her and drew her into his arms.

"If Dr. Graves will marry us tonight your mother will be satisfied," he said. "She can talk with him before the ceremony, can ask him all he knows about me. Then tomorrow or the next day, or next week—when you will—I shall take you away. You will? Then be ready in an hour, Charlotte." He bent and kissed her once, and then he bowed to Mrs. Tremaine and went away.

In the silence that followed his departure Charlotte cast one long look at her mother, who looked steadily back, and then the girl went away to her own dark room and shut the door, and the mother sat in the white glare of the electric light through the hour whose minutes were separate eternities. How had she failed? Because she had grown to loathe the nature of the girl as she had loathed Will Tremaine's soul, after she had learned to know him in

marriage. And even now, with the daring analysis this man had thrust upon her, she wondered dumbly what he, self-confessed sinner that he was, could fancy he saw in the girl to make him love her. For she was monstrous, monstrous!

Her old friend came up at last, and they talked together for fifteen minutes. His shocked surprise helped her, as did his broader sympathy. It was very sudden and most irregular, but it was open, and sanctioning it was far better for the young people than driving them to a mere civil service. As for young Mott, his account of himself was altogether true. He was a fast liver, but an honorable one, as men of his stamp rated honor. The good doctor even ventured to disclose that in his experiences among the non-elect he had been surprised to find just how high their standard of honor was, and with what condign punishment they punished a deliberate backslider therefrom. And then Mott came in, with young Morse very much surprised and very curious, and Mott himself went over to Charlotte's door and tapped gently thereat.

She opened it full upon him and came to him out of her chamber's blackness, her white dress crushed from her miserable tossings during this last hour, and her hair disordered. He gave her no minute of grace, but took her cold hand and led her to the white-haired minister. It was a strange, cold wedding, and neither the clergyman nor young Morse lingered after it. The door had hardly closed behind them when Mott bent down and kissed Charlotte gently.

"Forget everything now," he murmured. "There is plenty of time to think and plan."

His hand was on the door-knob when she called wildly: "Harry, Harry!" She rushed over to him and clung to him fiercely.

"You understand things," she said huskily. "She doesn't!" She swept one hand toward her mother. "She thinks all this is unspeakable, terrible! It is, it is, but not all her way. We

grate on each other horribly, she and I—we shall suffer damnable things together tonight, each of us—take me away! It's awful to go with you—but it's more horrible to stay!"

Mott glanced over her shivering shoulders at Mrs. Tremaine, and read the slight inclination of her head aright. He glanced at a clock in front of him.

"Can you be ready for the ten-thirty limited?" he asked the girl quietly. "That gives you half an hour. Very well, then. Don't bother with too much. Your trunks can come later."

He waited until she had refused her mother's help and had gone away by herself to make ready for her wedding trip. Then he turned to Mrs. Tremaine.

"This is terrible!" he said, almost harshly. "For every one of us. For you and me, and for her most of all. And words only cut now, and do not heal. So do not let us talk for a time. She is maddened, goaded—ah, don't you know that I know I am merely the way of escape to her now; that I know I shall have to face a fever of stung pride and fierce humiliation beside which this is nothing? Yours will not be the only pain in all this. Try to remember that, and sympathize with us both."

He came back, ready for the trip,

just as Charlotte came into her mother's sitting-room. "You'll go to Auntie May's just the same, mother," she said dully. "You can send my trunks from Los Angeles, if I want them." Then her eyes fell on Mott, and she paled.

"Oh, this is a mad, mad thing to do!" she said wildly. "How sorry I am for you, Harry, how sorry! It's all so true. I am cheap—beneath contempt——"

She stopped, amazed. Gertrude Tremaine had caught her daughter to her in a passionate embrace.

"Be good to her, Harry!" she said. "Be good to her. Be good to her. All her life long she will remember every second of this next month. Every second! Be good to her!"

She did not kiss the girl, but she strained her to her once again, and then put her quietly away, into Mott's arms. She watched them go; heard Charlotte's dull "good-bye"; knew that it was the bell-boy Joe who responded to Mott's ring and carried down their hand luggage. She stood a moment, watching the door after it closed behind them. Then she went over to her desk, to write a telegram to her sister and a note to Lane Nelson, before she began to pack her trunks and Charlotte's for the early morning train.



TRIOLET

THOUGH you forget me, I would fain,
 My dear, at least be worth forgetting!
 If this be so, I'll not complain
 Though you forget me. I would fain
 Die ere my love rouse your disdain,
 Or my remembrance your regretting.
 Though you forget me, I would fain,
 My dear, at least be worth forgetting!

COUNTESS OF WINCHILSEA.

CATASTROPHE!

Un élégant appartement rue de Courcelles. Boudoir de style anglais. Ça et là de ces sièges légers qui donnent l'impression de sauterelles d'acajou.

Madame va et vient, l'air agité; elle fredonne un air plutôt gai. Paraît vingt-cinq ans, donc trente; de celles dont on dit: pas jolie, jolie, mais crânement gentille! Nez amusant, bouche amusante, chevelure idem, tordue en un chignon au bout duquel frétille de petites mèches gamines. Au demeurant, malgré son air frivole, une personne extrêmement pratique.

Monsieur rentre. Type de clubman. Correction parfaite, canne à béquille d'argent, monocle. Très nouveau jeu, au physique comme au moral.

MAX—Bonjour, toi!

GERMAINE—...jour. Je vais te dire une chose qui te fera de la peine.

MAX—Je parie que tu as couronné le poney.

GERMAINE—Non, c'est beaucoup plus triste: l'oncle Aristide est mort!

MAX—L'oncle Aristide? Tu peux te vanter de m'avoir fait une peur! Ah! le pauvre bonhomme, le pauvre bonhomme!

GERMAINE—Comme les malheurs arrivent! Qu'est-ce qui nous aurait dit, il y a un quart d'heure?...

MAX—Tu es sûre, qu'il est mort... tout à fait?

GERMAINE—Dame, c'est une chose qu'on ne fait généralement pas à demi.

MAX—Sans doute! mais on aurait pu t'apprendre qu'il était mourant, désespéré, sans pourtant...

GERMAINE—Oh! il n'y a pas de doute, voilà la lettre: c'est signé du notaire.

Elle lui passe la lettre et il lit:

ME. DESCAMPETTE
Notaire

A BEAUME-LES-BELLES

MONSIEUR:

Connaissant la profonde affection qu'avait pour vous votre oncle, M. Aristide Mache-

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lard, j'ai le triste devoir de vous annoncer que ce digne vieillard a succombé hier aux suites d'une embolie.

Je crois savoir que le défunt n'avait pas d'autres parents que vous au degré succésible. Par suite, la fortune, évaluée à huit cent mille francs, vous revient en totalité.

Je préciserai le chiffre après la levée des scellés.

Recevez..., etc.

MAX—Ça y est, il n'y a pas d'erreur.

GERMAINE—Huit cent mille francs!

MAX—Au bas mot; il ne dépensait rien... C'est égal, cela me fera quelque chose de jouir de cette fortune.

GERMAINE—Que veux-tu, mon chéri, il faut se faire une raison. Ton pauvre oncle, après tout, ne pouvait pas l'emporter avec lui.

MAX—Oh! s'il l'avait pu, il n'eût pas hésité, il tenait tant à son argent!

GERMAINE—Oui, il avait de l'ordre. Je l'ai peu connu, moi, mais je me sentais attirée, il avait une si bonne figure

MAX—Excellente! Le caractère avait des angles, mais le cœur était d'une droiture!

GERMAINE—Et dire que nous n'avons pu assister à ses derniers moments!

MAX—Lui adoucir la fin.

GERMAINE—Je ne me le pardonnerai pas.

MAX—Que veux-tu, nous ne savions pas. Enfin, nous conserverons pieusement sa mémoire.

GERMAINE—Nous porterons son deuil.

MAX—Oh! un deuil très sérieux.

GERMAINE—Je crois qu'il eût été content que nous portions un deuil très sérieux.

MAX—Oui, il était à cheval sur ces choses-là.

GERMAINE—Compte sur moi.

MAX—Bonne chérie!

GERMAINE—Peut-être pas du crêpe, ce serait excessif; mais du voile, du

drap. Avec les modes actuelles on fait de jolies choses.

MAX—Simples, il faudra des choses simples.

GERMAINE—Oui, pas de garnitures, des jupes qui moulent les hanches. C'est sévère; on sent la femme qui a voulu se vêtir, rien de plus.

MAX—Tâche qu'on les moule sans exagération.

GERMAINE—Sois tranquille... Ah! et puis du linge de soie noire. J'ai toujours désiré du linge noir.

MAX—Tu crois cela nécessaire?

GERMAINE—Nécessaire, non, mais c'est beaucoup plus deuil.

MAX—Oh! ce qui ne se voit pas...

GERMAINE (*d'un ton piqué*)—Le deuil est une affaire de cœur et non d'ostentation.

MAX—Sans doute, mais...

GERMAINE—Ainsi, je ne comprends pas ces femmes qui ont des jarretelles roses sous des toilettes de crêpe. Pour moi c'est ce que j'appelle l'hypocrisie de la douleur. Mais après tout, cela te regarde, l'oncle Aristide était de ton côté.

MAX—Soit, ma chérie! je respecte toutes tes délicatesses. Mets du linge de soie noire.

GERMAINE—Cela me semblait convenable.

MAX—Sais-tu ce qui me plaît en toi? C'est que tu as l'esprit de famille.

GERMAINE—Oh! c'est tout naturel. Et puis enfin, c'est triste à dire, mais mon budget de toilettes va se trouver forcément augmenté.

MAX—Certainement! Il ne faudrait pourtant pas...

GERMAINE—Quand on possède, on a le devoir de dépenser.

MAX—C'est vrai, mais il faut se garder...

GERMAINE—Tu penses bien que je ne vais pas jeter l'argent par les fenêtres. Cependant, si ton pauvre oncle a thésaurisé toute sa vie, ne devons-nous pas remettre un peu de cette fortune dans la circulation? L'argent doit circuler et ne pas s'accumuler dans les mêmes mains. C'est cela qui fait les révolutions.

MAX (*ahuri*)—Cela... et autre chose. Mais, où diable as-tu pris ces idées?

GERMAINE—C'est dans une revue que j'ai lu cela, dans ta *Revue d'Economie sociale*.

MAX—Les journaux exagèrent.

GERMAINE—Enfin, nous devons changer notre train de vie.

MAX—Un peu. J'achèterai un cheval de selle.

GERMAINE—Et moi quelques bijoux.

MAX—Nous recevrons davantage.

GERMAINE—J'aimerais une villa à Trouville.

MAX—Moi, une chasse.

GERMAINE—Ma joie sera d'aller chez les grandes couturières. (*Elle hésite, puis, prenant son élan*) A propos, mon ami, j'avais toujours oublié de te dire... J'ai un petit compte chez la mienne.

MAX—S'il est petit, il n'y a qu'un demi-mal.

GERMAINE—C'est que "petit" est une façon de parler, le compte est plutôt gros.

MAX—Diable! Et combien?

GERMAINE (*craintive*)—Cinq mille.

MAX—Fichtre! il en faut des robes pour...

GERMAINE (*éclatant*)—Oh! voilà bien les hommes! Mais vous ne savez donc pas ce que coûte une toilette, aujourd'hui!

MAX—Si fait. Mais cinq mille francs d'arriéré, tu avoueras...

GERMAINE—C'est relativement peu. Si tu savais ce que la plupart des femmes... Seulement, il y en a qui cachent à leurs maris, qui s'arrangent...

MAX—Germaine, ne dis pas de ces choses-là.

GERMAINE (*câlme*)—Tu sais bien, vilain, que ta femme n'a pas de secrets pour toi.

MAX—Oui, mais pour en revenir à la somme...

GERMAINE—Est-ce qu'on n'a pas sonné?

MAX—Tu crois?

GERMAINE—Oui, écoute.

La porte s'ouvre et le valet de chambre introduit Hubert des Taillis, type de gentilhomme campagnard.

HUBERT—Eh bien! vous savez la nouvelle?

MAX (*prenant un air de circonstance*)—L'oncle Machelard!... Oui, mon ami, nous venons précisément d'apprendre...

HUBERT—Cela ne m'a pas surpris.

MAX—Ah! tu prévoyais?

HUBERT—Nous savions tous, à Beaume, qu'il finirait ainsi.

GERMAINE—C'était une affection ancienne?

HUBERT—Ah! je crois bien. Mais il n'en parlait à personne.

GERMAINE—On n'aime pas à parler de ces choses-là.

HUBERT—Parbleu!

MAX—Le pauvre oncle! C'est profondément triste!

GERMAINE—Epouvantable!

HUBERT—Bast! n'exagérons rien, ces histoires-là arrivent tous les jours.

MAX—Je ne dis pas, mais cela n'en est pas moins pénible.

HUBERT—Sans doute, pour la famille, on n'aime jamais cela. Mais que voulez-vous, il faut bien que vieillesse se passe... (*Il rit.*)

MAX—Voyons, Hubert, pas de plaisanteries, tu nous vois dans le chagrin et...

HUBERT—Je ne puis pourtant pas fondre en larmes parce que ton coquin d'oncle épouse sa cuisinière.

MAX—Que diable veux-tu dire?

HUBERT—Mais je croyais que vous saviez?

MAX—Ecoute, Hubert, mon oncle est mort, et en admettant que, de son vivant, il ait eu des projets... ancillaires, après tout, c'était bien son droit.

HUBERT—Voyons, voyons, qu'est-ce que tu me racontes là? Mort, le tonton Machelard? mais je l'ai quitté hier solide comme le Pont-Neuf.

MAX—Il est mort subitement. (*Lui tendant la lettre.*) Tiens, vois!

HUBERT (*lit la lettre*)—Beaume-les-Belles, 1^{er} avril... Premier avril! ah!

elle est bonne, elle est bien bonne! Je parie que c'est un tour de Gaston! Figure-toi qu'il me disait dernièrement: "Je suis bien en retard avec Max. Il faudra que je lui écrive le 1^{er} avril. Je lui ferai une farce..." Ah! c'est égal, elle est macabre.

MAX—Mais tu ne vois donc pas, c'est signé du notaire.

HUBERT—Descampette? Nous n'avons pas de notaire de ce nom-là. Celui de Beaume s'appelle Tripouille.

MAX—Alors, ça serait une blague?

GERMAINE—L'oncle Machelard serait vivant?

HUBERT—Parbleu! Allons, ne pleurnichez plus. Il est vivant, si vivant que, d'ici peu, il vous donnera des petits cousins... Mais riez donc!

MAX—Il y a bien de quoi, quand mon sale oncle déshonore la famille, car c'est vrai, ce mariage, dis... bien vrai?

HUBERT—Officiel.

MAX—Et, on le prévoyait, là-bas?

HUBERT—Ils étaient fiancés depuis dix ans.

GERMAINE—Quelle horreur! mais cela ne m'étonne pas. Il avait une tête à cela. Vous savez, moi, je n'ai pas varié, il m'a toujours été antipathique.

MAX—Je comprends cela, un vieillard débauché.

GERMAINE—Et avare!

MAX—D'une avarice sordide, car il est riche, très riche.

GERMAINE—Est-ce qu'on peut laisser sa fortune à sa femme quand on épouse une cuisinière?

HUBERT—Oui, chère Madame, la loi ne distingue pas.

GERMAINE (*éclatant en sanglots*)—Mais c'est abominable!

HUBERT—Voyons, Madame, ne pleurez-pas, puisqu'on vous dit que votre oncle n'est pas mort.

MAX—Laissez-la! cela la soulage. Elle n'avait pas encore pu pleurer.



"HOW long has Budway been living in bachelor quarters?"
"Ever since he was married."

CUPID'S BONFIRE

IT seems a sinful thing to do,
 Yet fate compels me to it;
 AMOR I used to be to you,
 But now it's AMOR FUIT.
 Before me leaps the hungry fire,
 Bound fast in brazen fetters;
 Behind me, broken, lies Desire;
 Beside me, heap your letters.

Just once more now, and only once;
 This is the very last time
 That I shall play the role of Dunce
 In tragedy for pastime:
 I'll read them from the happy start
 Down to the dismal finish,
 And mark the beatings of my heart
 Increase and then diminish.

The earliest to greet me here
 Has pressed within its pages
 Some rose-leaves, and it's not a year,
 For all that it seems ages,
 Since they came fragrant from your hand—
 Into the flames to sweep them?
 Whether or not you'll understand,
 I think that I shall keep them.

And, on the whole, I think I'll take
 A cue from one small rose-leaf,
 And for dear old acquaintance' sake
 Send you just one more prose leaf.
 Love's Bonfire—we will let that wait;
 Perhaps another letter
 Will turn the horrid wheel of Fate
 Or—make the fire burn better!

FELIX CARMEN.



SAD

THE FATHER—Is it necessary for you to give the girls so many advantages?
 THE MOTHER—It is if you wish them to amount to anything. Why, at present they are not even ashamed of you.

A SUPPRESSED ORATOR

By Tom Masson

“‘I’M going to make a speech.”

Von Blumer’s face was suffused with the gentle glow of enthusiasm. As he made this announcement somewhat defiantly to Mrs. Von Blumer he waved one arm gracefully in the air, as if unconsciously he was already beginning to declaim.

“You are going to make a speech!” repeated Mrs. Von Blumer, gazing at him in wild astonishment. “When and where are you going to make it? And what in the world has induced you to do such a thing?”

Von Blumer regarded her sternly, with a look of pitying contempt.

“I knew, of course,” he replied austere, “that you would feel that way about it. A man’s wife never gives him credit for any hidden talent he may possess. I haven’t the slightest doubt in the world, madam, that you will do everything in your power to oppose me in this matter. But your opposition will make no difference to me. Yes, I am going to make a speech. Two weeks from tonight there’s to be a dinner, and the boys have called on me. It’s to be the effort of my life.”

Mrs. Von Blumer’s face expressed a degree of sadness that, to say the least, was not encouraging.

“My dear,” she said, “have you positively agreed to do this?”

“I have. Nothing but death can prevent.”

“But don’t you know you’re not fitted for this sort of thing?”

“There you go! What did I say? I knew how it would be. Always throwing cold water on my efforts, always keeping me down.”

“But, dear, you know I want you to

succeed in it; still, you must remember that you haven’t the voice, you haven’t the command of language, and you haven’t the experience necessary. You don’t want to make a fool of yourself, do you?”

Her husband advanced toward her threateningly.

“Woman!” he cried, “I defy you! You don’t understand me, you never have understood me. If there is one thing in the world I am naturally fitted for, it’s to make an after-dinner speech. All these years this has been hidden away, and now that I have a chance to become famous, to show what I can do, my own wife throws every obstacle in my way. But it makes no difference to me. I shall go on. My triumph will come later. When you see the papers the next morning you’ll be sorry all right.”

Mrs. Von Blumer sighed. Then, with an effort, she smiled feebly.

“You are determined to do it?”

“I most certainly am. Nothing can stop me.”

“Very well. Then I sha’n’t say anything more. I hope you’ll succeed. There!”

Von Blumer’s face softened. His manner relaxed.

“Good!” he exclaimed. “That’s right. I was afraid you were going to make trouble for me. Now you can help me if you will. This speech, of course, will be impromptu—that is to say, just as if I had never given it a thought—right off the bat. I’ve got it practically all ready now and I want you to listen to it. Only——”

He came over and looked his wife sternly in the face.

"No false praise. Tell me the truth. I want to have it right, and you are the only one who can help me."

"Very well, I will tell you what I think."

Von Blumer went over and sat down on the other side of the writing-desk. Then, having arranged the inkstand, the pens and other articles in front of him as if they were knives and forks and cut-glass dishes, he pushed back his chair and slowly arose—a Cheshire grin on his face that was otherwise taken up with an expression about on a par with a hopeless idiot. He began:

"MR. PRESIDENT and GENTLEMEN:

"As I gaze about me this evening at the magnificent body of men here present, representing as you do the highest intelligence of our glorious land, I do so with pride to think that I am one of you. Mr. President, I appreciate the great honor that has been thrust upon me, and I am proud to be here. Wholly unprepared as I am, upon the spur of the moment, as it were, to make a formal speech, I should like to say a few words about that spirit of good-fellowship which has prompted us to gather together tonight over a common mahogany, and which binds us together still closer. Gentlemen——"

Von Blumer suddenly stopped. He caught Mrs. Von Blumer looking at him with an agonized expression as she raised her hand.

"Well, well!" he said impatiently. "What's the matter? Isn't that great? Isn't that a good beginning?"

Mrs. Von Blumer shuddered.

"Why, that isn't like you," she exclaimed. "It isn't natural. It's as old as the hills. Why do you strain so and bulge your eyes out? Oh, oh, it's simply awful!"

Her enraged husband, unable to contain himself longer, walked to the door. His voice trembled with rage.

"This ends everything between us," he hissed. "After this you go your way and I go mine. But, madam, remember"—he paused melodramatically—"remember that when I have made a success of this thing, when the world recognizes my humble efforts, don't come fawning around me and ask me to overlook what you have done. For now all is over between us."

He slammed the door behind him and was gone.

For twenty-four hours after this episode Von Blumer studiously avoided his wife. The second day he appeared, sullen and defiant. The third day he condescended to talk in monosyllables. The fourth day Mrs. Von Blumer heard him declaiming to himself in his room. Thereafter for several days she recognized his voice, intense and fearfully elocutionary, coming from various parts of the house at intervals during the evening.

As the time drew near for the night of the dinner she observed that her husband grew more nervous. His appetite had fallen off. His old-time vivacity had departed. He seemed to be, in the language of an authority, a sadder and a wiser man.

On the morning of the fatal day, as he sat down to the breakfast-table, he passed his hand wearily over his brow.

"What's the matter, dear?" asked Mrs. Von Blumer anxiously. "Don't you feel well?"

"No, I don't. I feel pretty bad. If this keeps up I'm afraid I'll have to give up that dinner tonight."

"Oh, that would be too bad! You have counted on it so. Stay home and rest a little today. Then you'll be all right."

Von Blumer looked at his wife curiously. Her gentle tones melted him, and then he was worn out with his efforts. He longed for help and sympathy.

"My dear," he said, "I guess you were right about that speech, after all. As the moment gets nearer and I've got to face all those men, I begin to realize that I am not up to the job."

"You mustn't feel that way. Don't worry about it. Just get up and say a few words, just as if you were talking to them. You'll get along all right."

Mrs. Von Blumer's encouraging words were too much.

"No, dear," he replied. "I realize now that you were dead right. I ought never to have dreamed of such a thing. I was a fool to undertake it. I'd give

—oh, anything—to get out of it. I'd rather be operated on—honest, I would."

The wife in Mrs. Von Blumer reassured itself. Her heart went out to her penitent husband.

"Why don't you read something?" she said. "By the way, I saw an awfully funny little poem the other day in a scrap-book. It's so old that it's new."

She hustled out of the room and returned with the book.

"I'm sure," she said, "it will be just the thing. It's short, and something that men like."

Von Blumer jumped up as he glanced it over.

"Great!" he exclaimed. "Just the thing! That lets me out, doesn't it? I'll do it, and you are a dear, good girl."

The next morning, between one and two, Mrs. Von Blumer opened the door

for him as he came in, his face reflecting all the happiness that a good dinner and good company give.

"Well!" she said. "How was it? How did you get along?"

Her husband smiled patronizingly.

"How did I get along!" he exclaimed radiantly. "Why, I was the hit of the evening. That little poem was received with thunders of applause. But, my dear, I made the mistake of my life, and all through you."

"Through me! How was that?"

Von Blumer waved his arm in the air.

"Simply because you thwarted me in my efforts to make a speech by all your mistaken ideas. If I had only ignored you and taken the thing into my own hands, why, tomorrow I would be known as one of the greatest after-dinner speakers of the day. My own wife is all that prevented me from becoming famous!"



CONSOLATION

"AT least," remarked the Cherubim,
 "There's one sure thing that must delight us."
 "What's that?" inquired the Seraphim.
 "We cannot have appendicitis!"

CAROLYN WELLS.



HIS ONLY CHANCE OF PROVING IT

"PAPA, what is a thoroughbred?"
 "I am, my son, when your mother is away on her vacation."



A SURE SIGN

STRANGER (*in Adirondacks*)—Has the hunting season opened yet?
 GUIDE—Oh, yes. The first man was brought in this morning.

THE POET'S CREDITORS

WHEN dusk lay brooding o'er the hill,
 And all within the house was still,
 Came hurrying each creditor,
 And stood without the poet's door.

"A joy I lent thee," spake an hour;
 "And I a fragrance," said a flower;
 "And I a color," said a dove;
 "And I a grief," remembered Love.

"I lent thee larger sight!" called Mars,
 "I let thee stand amid the stars
 And see spring's wave of blossom roll
 From the Equator to the Pole."

The poet flung his door awide.
 "I can but give myself!" he cried,
 "For unto me myself ye lent—
 Then take it now in settlement."

AGNES LEE.



WHAT THEY FEARED

THE GAMBLER'S WIFE—Wake up, dear!
 THE GAMBLER (*sleepily*)—What's the matter?
 "I'm sure I hear a policeman downstairs."



WEARING WORK

"ELSIE is too fond of deep books. It is telling upon her."
 "What is she reading now?"
 "A light novel by Henry James."

FOR THE PARIS SALON

By Kate Masterson

IN the shadows of a dim wood, rich with the charred odors of a fire that had only ceased to smolder, she walked curiously. The darkness of the forest was grim and terrible, unlike the fragrant bloom that comes from clustering leaves and living boughs interlacing overhead.

This was a place of death. There was no sudden scenting of new blooms to carry the eyes up or down searching for a trailing vine alight with star-flowers, or vivid with scarlet berries. No bird fluttered or cooed in the silence. No rabbit or squirrel ran across the path; there was no call or cry of life—not even the welcome ripple of water over the stones.

Her feet crunched harshly on the blackened turf; her eyes caught somber gray lights deepening to black among the bare tree trunks; there was no hint of green or purple—those delicious lurking blurs of color that people a forest with living beauty, changing with every step as some new light falls upon them, feasting the eyes with their glow like jewels on a velvet mat.

And the scents of the wood—those wonderful tonic odors, now sharp and spicy, again sweet, almost cloying, then fresh with the smell of dead leaves washed in the brook, all toning the senses to expectation of some new delight, a consciousness of life—of something akin to humanity, yet finer, sweeter, purer.

Thronged with these thoughts she turned suddenly, frightened by the loneliness, the dark, the silence, as a child is when the lamp is carried away. She knew that she could never again walk through the wood, alive and rich in bloom, and verdure, and scent of

spring without thinking of this sister forest—dead, yet decked with no garlands, wept over by none of those that had loved its solitude.

Tears touched her eyes and she forgot for the time the picture that she had come to seek amid these sad aisles that now oppressed her as though she had entered some vast grave. She was heavy-hearted with the woes of all the world, it seemed, with mourning for all womenkind that had walked through these trees when they were living, with lovers or with little children pulling at their skirts.

Then she heard a sound a little distance off, and her heart stood still with a dread of something—it was not of a human being or of an animal, but of what might be in this dead forest with her alone. There was a step—a slow step—a body moving painfully somewhere toward her down the path, between the black trees.

She waited, and then the fear in her heart changed to an ineffable delight, for she knew that on that path there came to her something of moment—someone whom she might help or who would bring to her some joy—and the blood mounted to her face at the thought, that thus, amid these embered trees, might love come to her—love that she had not known, but had dreamed of over her paints and canvas.

It was a wonderful moment, and then down toward her came an old woman walking painfully with her body bent beneath a bundle of charred branches, gathered in the ruin of the wood and caught together on her back with a tattered old shawl that had once been red, but was now faded to a brickish yellow.

Her face was almost brown, wrinkled, gnarled even, with age, and there were ugly black furrows that spoke of storms and tempests, passions and tears that had passed, leaving each its mark. Her toothless mouth mumbled some chant; it might have been a prayer or an imprecation for all its tempo told.

Beneath a hat that had once been a man's, coarse gray hair was caught up, and the eyes were sunk deep under shaggy brows, also masculine in their sternness. But for the ragged skirts that flapped about her thin legs the old woman's sex might have been a matter of conjecture, so far had gentleness departed from her.

The girl started forward with an impulse to lighten the load on the bent shoulders, but the woman turned with a scowl and what sounded like an imprecation; she seemed to fear that the girl might rob her of one of her fagots. And as she passed with that look, half fearful and half evil, in her worn old eyes, a raven swooped above them, silent but for the flash of its dark wings as it turned sharply and made for the sky.

The girl felt something in her throat, and the tears at her eyes fell over her face as she turned hurriedly to make

her way from this awful place. The woman's slow step had ceased to sound now, and the air had grown chilly. And the girl was suffering some strange mental torture that she could not understand.

It was several years afterward that she painted the wonderful picture, "Dead Fires," that took the prize at the Paris Salon, and made her famous the world over. And it was a simple thing—a path in a burned wood and the bent figure of an old, old woman, with a bundle of charred boughs on her back, held in place by a shawl of strange color. Her face was bent so that it was hidden, and there was no touch of grace or beauty in her. The tree trunks were straight and black, with dull gray shadows deepening into a vista of impenetrable darkness, and a raven swept its wings upward overhead.

But living people walking through the aisles of beautiful canvases—radiant nudes and French landscapes in purple, and pink, and lilac—paused before this oblong panel, and felt their hearts heavy and tears in their eyes, over the tragedy of the dead forest that the girl had felt, unknowing, and had put into her picture so strongly that it was like a requiem for the past.



THE IDLE RICH

"**H**OW long has your son been out of college?"
"Ever since he went in."



GRAFT

FIRST POLITICIAN—Are you back from your vacation for good?
SECOND POLITICIAN—No; for evil.